BUILDING A NEW CITY

CORK'S PUBLIC WORKS, 1920-1945

TADGH QUILL-MANLEY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
2

A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES, 1920-1924
6

PAVING THE WAY, 1925-1929
69

A COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN, 1930-1935
93

MUNICIPAL DREAMS, FINANCIAL REALITIES, 1936-1939
126

WORKS IN WARTIME, 1940-1945
148

CONCLUSION
173

POEM - 'THE CORPORATION SEAL'
177

BUILDING A NEW CITY

INTRODUCTION

In the long arc of Irish urban history, few cities bear the wounds and tenacity of survival as openly as Cork City. Between 1920 and 1945, Cork City had endured tumult, transformation, and reconstruction at a scale unprecedented in its civic development. The destruction of much of the city centre during the Burning of Cork in December 1920 by Crown forces had initiated a cascade of civic crises and municipal reinvention. This manuscript, '*Building a New City: Cork's Public Works, 1920–1945*,' navigates the slow, frequently interrupted journey from ashes to renewal, from collapse to civic functioning, and from isolation to pragmatic adaptation during a global war.

To truly understand the implications of Cork City's physical and administrative reconstruction, one must begin with the events of 1920. The Burning of Cork obliterated vital commercial and administrative infrastructure, leaving a city disfigured both materially and institutionally. In response, a dense network of civic actors, from the Reconstruction Committee to local business owners and labour advocates, struggled to coordinate and initiate the rebuilding process. The city's leadership was at pains to affirm both its self-styled republican values, and its right to urban self-determination, while simultaneously seeking compensation from a London government now beginning (somewhat reluctantly) to distance itself from its administrative footprint in Ireland.

The efforts at rebuilding were frustrated by politics as much as by logistics. Accusations of foot-dragging, political point-scoring, and bureaucratic inertia abound in the archival record. Delegations travelled to meet faction leaders; pressure was also applied to the Provisional Government; delays continued. Amidst this, a vision for an improved urban centre emerged, one that sought not just replacement but architectural cohesion, civic utility, and symbolic renewal. Yet, the competing interests of property owners, architects, trades councils, and government departments constantly jarred this idealistic ambition.

BUILDING A NEW CITY

Perhaps most emblematic of the city's destabilised political trajectory was the 1924 dissolution of Cork Corporation. After a public inquiry—itself seemingly tinged with political motivations—the city Corporation was deemed incapable of sound governance. Mr. Philip Monahan, the Irish Free State's first City Commissioner, was appointed to replace the elected body. His appointment marked a pivotal shift in Irish local governance: the centralisation of municipal power and the importation of managerialism to local administration. The dissolution fractured public trust, but it also imposed a certain kind of order that allowed, at least theoretically, for more efficient urban administration during a period of national instability.

Mr. Monahan's tenure, although often regarded as very competent, cannot be overly romanticised. It coincided with profound economic strain, as the post-independence state struggled to fund local needs. Urban management became an exercise in triage: limited funds had to be allocated across competing imperatives—housing, sanitation, employment relief, and city planning. These pressures only intensified with the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, when already-scarce financial resources were stretched past their limits.

Public works in Cork City during this era reflected not merely infrastructure concerns, but the social and political dimensions of survival in a rapidly evolving Irish state. The Corporation (and later, the newer Council following the reinstatement of local government in 1929) turned to pragmatic relief schemes: street paving, road tarring, sewerage improvement, and public lighting were framed as both economic stimuli and public necessity. Yet behind these statistics lies a more complex picture of working-class distress, administrative constraint, and contested visions of modernity. The onset of the Economic War between the Irish Free State and Britain further constricted the city's ability to function. Tariffs and trade disruptions impacted port activity and business confidence, while rural economic hardship reverberated in urban migration and unemployment. As the state pursued economic self-sufficiency, the paradox for Cork

City was acute: a port city historically dependent on maritime trade found itself disconnected from vital supply routes and import channels. City management found itself unable to counteract macro-economic stagnation, relying instead on underfunded housing and relief projects to stem civil dissatisfaction.

Cork City's wartime experience in the 1940s added yet another layer of complexity. Though officially neutral, Ireland was a state gripped by a creeping proximity to total war. Cork, as a neutral port city, existed in a liminal space—protected from the direct trauma of bombardment, yet constantly preparing for its possibility. In a controversial move, Cork Corporation financed the construction of air-raid shelters, a paradox in a city still struggling with housing shortages. The presence of the Crown and American navies in Irish waters, while never formally acknowledged, underlined Cork's continued strategic relevance.

Moreover, World War II (usually referred to in Ireland as 'The Emergency') further entrenched rationing, blackouts, and city council austerity. Public works slowed; materials were often redirected; labour shortages emerged. Yet within these constraints, a local ethos of resilience persisted. Cork City managed not only to survive, but also to reshape itself. The era saw the gestation of many long-term infrastructural improvements, and planted the seeds for post-war social housing expansion and urban zoning.

This manuscript does not offer a linear or triumphalist account. Instead, it offers an honest interrogation of what it meant to rebuild amidst constraint, to govern under suspicion, and to plan amidst political chaos. The city that emerges by 1945 is neither utopian nor broken—but enduring. The Cork Corporation (now known as Cork City Council) and its public works programmes represent a case study in twentieth-century Irish urban resilience, and a reminder that civic renewal is not a product of singular moments, but of layered, often conflicted, and persistently human efforts.

CORCAGENSIS · COMVNE · SIGILLVM · CIVITATIS

BUILDING A NEW CITY

A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES, 1920-1924

A meeting of the Public Works Committee took place in February 1920, with Alderman E. Coughlan presiding. The Secretary announced that the first item of business was the election of a Vice-Chairman, which had been postponed from the previous meeting. On the motion of Councillor M. O'Cuill (Quill), seconded by Councillor Daly, the election was deferred once more to the next meeting. Councillor Allen proposed a resolution stating that the members of the Public Works Committee of the Corporation should request that Messrs. Henry Ford and Sons, The Marina, give first preference to city workers when employing additional staff. The Chairman accepted this as a notice of motion for the following meeting, and this course of action was adopted. A deputation representing one-horse owners employed by the Highway Department attended, and requested payment for polling day on 15th January 1920, which had been declared a holiday for city Corporation employees. The Town Clerk noted that approving this request would likely result in a surcharge, as the deputation members were considered as contractors, rather than direct employees. Several members expressed the opinion that the deputation had a legitimate case, pointing out that the holiday had been imposed on them, and that they had still paid their drivers' wages for that day. Following a show of hands, it was agreed to grant their request, on the condition that the Corporation would be indemnified against any surcharge. The deputation offered a guarantee that the one-horse owners would enter into a bond in line with the Committee's decision. A similar request was presented on behalf of stonecutters, masons, and labourers who had not worked at Grenville Quay on the same date. It was decided to approve their pay, subject to the sanction of the City Solicitor. The City Treasurer reported that the previous year's Committee had operated under budget by £462, which was regarded by Mr. Horgan as a very satisfactory outcome and evidence of the Committee's diligence and effective work.

A letter from Mr. John F. Maguire, City Sub-Sheriff, was read. It highlighted inadequate lighting in the Courthouse and its passageways and suggested replacing the current system with electric lighting. Mr. Daly remarked dismissively that the existing setup was generally sufficient. Alderman Barry sarcastically suggested transferring the existing lighting from Blarney Lane to the Courthouse. Councillor O'Cuill moved, and Councillor Daly seconded, that the letter be simply noted. Mr. Bowes commented that if the Courthouse had been built at King's Castle, it would have been the city Corporation's duty to provide proper lighting. Alderman Barry remarked that given how much business was conducted "in the dark," those responsible should be able to manage their own affairs accordingly. The motion to note the letter was agreed to. Mr. Fitzpatrick then presented his audit report for the accounts of the Cork Gas Consumers' Company for the year ending 30th June. He reported a working profit of £5,623 0s 6d. Alderman Beamish inquired about the cost to the Corporation for lighting the city. The City Engineer responded that he was preparing a report on the matter and would present it at a future meeting. Alderman O'Sullivan asked whether the Tramway Company bore responsibility for maintaining the sections of road around their tracks, citing poor conditions on some streets. The City Engineer responded that the company was obliged to maintain its permanent way to the satisfaction of the city Corporation. However, due to staffing and financial constraints—particularly in the post-war period—the company had seemingly fallen behind. Typically, only one or two crews were available to cover eleven miles of rail, when six or seven would have been more appropriate. Professor Rahilly remarked that the company, while seeking to remain privately operated and enjoy certain privileges, should nonetheless meet its obligations. Alderman O'Sullivan added that some repairs had also been unsatisfactory. The City Engineer said he had approved the company's repair method but would write to them again. In the event of continued neglect, he stated, the Corporation could undertake the repairs itself and bill the company. It was agreed to leave the matter in the City Engineer's hands.

In line with agreements between trade bodies and employers, applications were made to grant the following pay increases to city Corporation workers: for plumbers, an additional 2d per hour (or 8s 6d per week) from 5th January 1920; and for masons, bricklayers, and paviours, an increase of 4d per hour from 1st January 1920. Furthermore, for the period from 3rd November to 31st December, it was proposed that working hours be reduced to 47 per week without reducing weekly pay from that set for a 50-hour week. Mr. Day cautioned that some of the workers may have already received a bonus that brought their wages above the standard rate, and he moved that, in each case, standard wages be paid with any bonuses deducted. This proposal was adopted. However, the Committee then rejected an application from the city Corporation's slaters and plasterers, who had requested a 12½% bonus from the date it had been granted to other Corporation employees.[1]

At the March 1920 meeting of the Public Works Committee, Alderman E. Coughlan proposed the following resolution:

> *"That this meeting of the Public Works Committee be now adjourned as a mark of respect to the memory of our late Lord Mayor, who was recently assassinated in his own home. We also extend our sincere sympathy to the Lady Mayoress and the members of her family on the terrible loss they have sustained."*

The motion was seconded by Councillor M. O'Cuill (Quill) and was passed unanimously. Councillor O'Cuill added that he wished to reserve his fuller comments until the ongoing inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy had concluded.[2]

A meeting was held in April 1920, with Councillor R. Day presiding. Those present included Messrs. S. Daly, J. Kelleher (South), M. Egan, J. Fitzpatrick, J. Allen, M. O'Cuill, and

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[1] *Evening Echo 25/2/1920*

[2] *Evening Echo 25/3/1920*

Alderman T. Barry. The City Engineer reported that a pay increase of 12 shillings and 6 pence per week, requested by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, would amount to an annual cost of £2,443 8s 4d if granted to Union members employed in his department. Consideration of the matter was deferred, pending the specific findings of the Wages Commission. A letter was also read from the South of Ireland Trinidad Lake Asphalt Company, Ltd., regarding proposed terms of maintenance to be included in the contract conditions for new asphalting works on Lower Glanmire Road. It was agreed to adjourn further discussion until the Vice-chairman, Alderman Beamish, could attend.

A communication from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was also read, requesting that Daniel O'Connor, a fitter, and Denis Mulcahy, a smith—both employed by the Corporation—be placed on the same wage scale as other mechanics in the Corporation's employment. The City Engineer noted that both men had long service records and were skilled tradesmen. He confirmed the efficiency with which they had carried out their duties, and acknowledged that their current wages did not match those of other mechanics. Mr. Egan expressed concern over the issue, stating that while he was not opposed to the application, he believed there was something fundamentally wrong if these employees had been underpaid for such a long time. He suggested writing to the Secretary of the Engineers' Society to confirm whether the two men were members. Some members felt that the fact the application came from a recognised union was sufficient grounds to proceed. On the motion of Mr. Fitzpatrick, seconded by Mr. Allen, it was unanimously agreed to place the two applicants on equal pay with other mechanics.

Separately, in accordance with prior notice, Councillor Allen moved that the firm of Messrs. Henry Ford and Son, Ltd., be requested to give employment preference to city workmen when hiring additional staff. He stated that he understood a promise to that effect had been given by the company's officials to the late Lord Mayor. Trusting that this promise would be honoured, Councillor Allen chose to withdraw the

motion. However, Alderman Barry requested that the motion instead be forwarded to the full Council meeting as a recommendation. This course of action was agreed upon.[3]

At a July meeting of the Public Works Committee, in reference to the application submitted by Messrs. Furlong for permission to establish a link line between their premises on Victoria Road and the Cork City Railway on Albert Quay, it was decided that a special Visiting Committee should be appointed to inspect the site in question. The Secretary reported an incident involving the interruption of public lighting operations at 3 a.m. on a Sunday morning, when the city's lamplighters were about to begin extinguishing the lamps. The City Engineer provided a report in response to the incident, stating:

> *"I beg to report that the members of the lamp-lighting staff who were rendered idle due to the decision not to light the city's lamps have since been redeployed among various city maintenance teams and assigned to alternative duties."*

The Committee approved this report. A letter was received from Messrs. Beamish and Crawford, Ltd., who had highlighted that they had surrendered approximately 1,000 super feet of street frontage on South Main Street to the Corporation, in line with a prior agreement. The firm contended that it would be unreasonable to ask them to also contribute financially to improvements of the roadway and footpath, given the value of the private property already relinquished. Following a motion proposed by Mr. Daly and seconded by Mr. Kelleher, the Committee resolved to uphold the agreement made by the previous Committee. It was decided that the improvement works would proceed and that provision for the associated costs would be included in the estimate for the upcoming half-year.[4]

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[3] *Cork Examiner 21/4/1920*

[4] *Cork Examiner 28/7/1920*

At an August meeting of the Public Works Committee of Cork Corporation, Councillor Jeremiah Kelleher presided. Alderman Coughlan addressed the assembly regarding the grave news concerning the condition of the Lord Mayor. He stated that it was unnecessary to describe the suffering being endured by the Lord Mayor, whose indomitable courage served as an inspiration to all. He urged that the Committee enter the strongest possible protest against what he described as the cruel treatment of the Lord Mayor by the British Government. Councillor Allen followed by remarking that if the British Government believed that, by removing Lord Mayor MacSwiney—as they had done with his predecessor, Lord Mayor MacCurtain—they could break the spirit of the Irish people, they were mistaken. Rather than weakening that spirit, such actions were strengthening it. He added that Ireland still had many good men, equally prepared to take the Lord Mayor's place if necessary. Councillor S. Daly supported this sentiment, stating that there were thirty members present who would be willing to follow in Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney's footsteps if needed. Alderman O'Sullivan concluded the exchange by affirming that all present joined in the protest.[5]

At a January 1921 meeting, the condition of the streets was complained about by members, and Mr. Kelleher said that at various hours throughout the day one could see Corporation employees, who were supposed to be cleaning the streets, standing with their brushes under their arms like idlers and discussing matters, but doing little work. Mr. Egan said that the whole discipline should be tightened, and any man who was not doing his work should be reported. Mr. Day remarked that it was very easy to make general accusations. If there was a charge of malingering against any man, the Trade Union to which he belonged would deal with him, but it was difficult to meet a general charge. Mr. Kelleher responded that one could not close one's eyes to the issue; it was happening all over the city. In reply to members, Mr. Scully (Superintendent) said these men had to make five loads per day, three on Saturdays, and three on Sunday

[5] *Cork Examiner 25/8/1920*

mornings. The City Engineer said they had between 65 and 68 miles of streets, of which only five or six were paved, and they had only a man and a half and half a horse assigned to each mile of street. The remedy was to pave the streets. Patrick Street, for example, used to cost from £400 to £500 a year before it was paved, but it now cost less than £50.

The City Engineer and Highway Superintendent were directed to use their best endeavours to improve the street cleansing. A letter was received from the Secretary of the Cork Gas Consumers' Company intimating that the price of gas would be reduced by ½d. per 1,000 cubic feet after the mid-winter indicts; the new charges for metered public lamps would be 5s. 6d. per 1,000 cubic feet, and the charge for incandescent lamps £2 18s. 10d. for 1,810 hours. This was considered satisfactory. The Committee decided to concrete Carey's Lane at a cost of £100 on the condition that the Pavilion Cinema Company pay half the cost. Mr. Moran was present representing the Company.[6]

At a Public Works Committee meeting in February 1921, Councillor Mr. Allen objected to the presence at the meeting of any reporters from the '*Cork Examiner*' or '*Cork Constitution*' offices while the dispute between their employer and his union was still ongoing. Under the circumstances, he considered it inappropriate for the reporters to remain at the meeting, as he could not see how they could participate properly in the proceedings. However, he had no objection to the press representatives themselves, who he acknowledged as honourable men throughout many years in labour disputes. Mr. Morgan commented that it would be very unfair to prevent the press from attending. The members of the Public Works Committee had nothing to say on the dispute except to express their wishes for a resolution.

Mr. Allen reiterated that this was precisely what he desired. Councillor [name unclear] then asked whether the objection was from Mr. Allen's side, noting that it was not a motion but rather a statement of position. It was made clear that the

[6] *Evening Echo 26/1/1921*

objection could not be withdrawn. Ultimately, the council did not allow the reporters from either of the '*Examiner*' or '*Constitution*' offices to remain during the discussion of the dispute.[7]

At a March 1921 meeting of the Committee, during the consideration of the accounts, Councillor Mr. French expressed his intention to move at the next meeting of the Law and Finance Committee that if any employees of the various departments were rate defaulters, their rates should be deducted from their salaries. The committee spent considerable time discussing the possibility of granting holidays to the workmen, which would require hiring substitutes and result in an additional cost of nearly £500 per annum. The Chairman stated that the Corporation could not afford this expenditure. Alderman De Roiste proposed, and it was decided, that a sub-committee be appointed to meet representatives of the workmen to explore whether the holidays could be granted without incurring extra costs to the Corporation. The City Engineer submitted a report concerning the paving and cleansing of the city streets. Alderman De Roiste commended the report as excellent in its scope covering all streets of Cork city, but remarked that the issue stemmed from the-then current poor condition of the streets. He observed that even considering the number of workmen and existing street surfaces, the streets should have been maintained in better condition. He acknowledged that while many streets were in poor repair, the main streets had good surfaces but were still not adequately cleansed.

Mr. Scully, the Highway Superintendent, responded that the streets were cleansed as thoroughly as possible, given that only one man was assigned for every mile and a half of roadway. The City Engineer highlighted a problematic practice whereby some shopkeepers swept refuse back onto the streets after cleaning, thereby negating the cleaning efforts. Alderman De Roiste and other members expressed the view that this illegal behaviour should be stopped through prosecutions. Further consideration of the matter was

[7] *Evening Echo 21/2/1921*

deferred. Recommendations from representatives of the electoral areas regarding expenditure for feminine and concrete work were confirmed.[8]

In April 1921, the estimates for the half-year, ending 30th September 1920, were examined. It was determined, on the motion of Councillor/Alderman French, and seconded by Councillor Day, to reduce the amount of £2,453 set down for repairs and maintenance of paving, flagging, crossings and kerbs. An amendent to refer the matter to a Sub-Committee was considered, having been moved by Councillor Horgan, and seconded by Councillor Mahony, was rejected. The next item on the agenda was the new Public Lighting estimate of approximately £6,000. This included a recommendation previously made by the Committee, and referred back by the Council, that all gas and electric lamps be kept unlit pending further orders. Mr. Horgan expressed the opinion that during dark nights public lighting should continue to provide protection to those who must be out, as well as to safeguard property. During the day, he agreed, lighting need not be carried out. The Chairman responded that under the current conditions citizens had to remain indoors, and lighting was therefore unnecessary. Mr. Egan added that there was adequate lighting at present, at least up to nine o'clock, and he did not consider lighting a significant preventive measure against looting. Mr. French proposed reducing the estimate by £2,000. The Chairman noted complaints from the public that the Corporation was wasting money on lighting at present, and supported reducing the estimate to £4,000, along with reducing the number of lamps lit. Other smaller items were also substantially reduced: the sum of £842 10s for the Mardyke, Marina, and street trees was cut down to £450, and the amount estimated for repairs of premises, implements, and tools was reduced from £1,000 to £800.[9]

[8] *Evening Echo 17/3/1921*

[9] *Evening Echo 28/4/1921*

During an April 1921 meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Mr. J. Barry stated that he was a member of the deputation from the building trades which had appeared before the Public Works Committee, when Alderman Beamish delivered what might be termed "a charity sermon." He clarified that they had not approached the committee seeking charity, but rather to obtain work. Alderman Beamish had alleged that high wages and lower output were responsible for new works not being started. However, Mr. Barry insisted this was not the case. The real obstacle to new buildings commencing was the technicalities of the city Corporation concerning reconstruction. He expressed gratitude to one committee member, Councillor Day, for his supposedly thorough repudiation of Alderman Beamish's remarks, noting that Councillor Day had taken a very manly stand on the occasion. Mr. Barry emphasised that the workers in Cork at the time were receiving only the bare economic wage and were providing as much work as they had ever done. He concluded by stating that their wages would not be reduced unless the cost of living genuinely decreased, and for the present, they intended to maintain their current earnings in that respect.[10]

At a May 1921 meeting of the Public Works Committee, a letter was received from the Secretary of the Cork Harbour Commissioners, stating that definite instructions had been given by the Board that under no circumstances should Parliament Bridge be opened before Clontarf Bridge was lowered, and that this instruction had been strictly adhered to. However, the Board was in no way responsible for the working of the Albert Bridge, which was owned and operated by the Cork City Railways Company. The communication was regarded as satisfactory by those present.[11]

At a meeting in June 1921, the consideration of applications for sick pay gave rise to a discussion. The Chairman brought to the Committee's attention the case of a man who was in

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[10] *Cork Examiner 9/4/1921*

[11] *Evening Echo 26/5/1921*

receipt of £2 7s 0d in sick pay, which he said was more than the man earned when working. The man had been receiving sick pay for eight years, had ten years' service with the Corporation, and was aged 54. Mr. Scully, the Highway Superintendent, pointed out that the man was still unable to work. However, some members felt that the whole question of sick pay should be considered by the Council. The Committee therefore decided to refer the matter back so that further particulars could be provided regarding the wages received by the man and others when they were working. Tenders were accepted for cartage in the City Engineer's and Highway Departments, with preference given to existing employees wherever possible.[12]

In August 1921, In accordance with an order of Council dated 26th February, a special committee, consisting of one member from each electoral district, was appointed to supervise the work of reconstruction of that portion of the city which was destroyed in the fires of 11th–12th December last. The following members were appointed for the purpose: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Barry M. Egan), Councillors French, D. Horgan, Jeremiah Kelleher (junior), D. Barry, J. Allen, V. F. O'Sullivan, T. P. Forde, N. Daly, and J. Fitzpatrick. The Committee, having been authorised to co-opt members from other bodies, appointed Capt. M. Haughton, Councillor Ellis, Messrs. W. L. Kelleher, James Curtin, and V. Crowley from the Industrial Development Association. The following gentlemen were also co-opted: Alderman R. H. Beamish, Messrs. F. J. Daly (Chairman, Cork Harbour Commissioners), A. F. Sherman-Crawford (Chairman, Technical Instruction Committee), John Daly (Chairman, Cork Employers' Federation), and Braham K. Sutton. The following persons represented the District Trades' and Labour Council: Messrs. George Nason (President), J. Weldon, Thomas Walsh, and V. J. Aherne; while the Co-operative Building Federation was represented by Messrs. E. Power, James Brew, and Terence McCarthy.

[12] *Cork Examiner 4/6/1921*

It was evident that the Committee was thoroughly representative of the industrial, commercial, and labour interests of the city. Six meetings of the General Committee had been held, while many conferences took place between a subcommittee appointed to deal with details and formulate proposals, and the owners, architects, and builders of the destroyed premises. The first business to engage the consideration of the Committee was the question of the possibility of widening Winthrop Street. It was suggested that the work could be accomplished by:

> (a) Acquiring the burnt-out site of Messrs. Thompson, Murphy, and Tyler, and determining a line running north and south through these sites, continued through this whole work from Thompson's corner to the motor showroom of Messrs. Johnson and Perrott. This line would be set back from the old line to such a distance as would be considered a suitable increase in the width of Winthrop Street.
> (b) Closing up and laying over Robert Street, and transferring back the whole of Block No. 3 for the width of this street.

It was pointed out that the Corporation was not in a position to undertake the original proposition. Conferences were held with property holders in Robert Street, and it was reported that the most strenuous opposition would be offered to the closing of that thoroughfare. The City Solicitor advised that the street could not be closed except upon an agreement being entered into with the owners and occupiers of the property therein, and as the occupiers first dealt with were not willing to enter such an agreement, the closing of the thoroughfare was not feasible. The Committee therefore reluctantly postponed the proposal. The matter was further considered at a later date, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Council that the necessary steps be taken to close the thoroughfare, pointing out that certain adjoining owners objected to an opportunity which then presented itself, and which, in the opinion of the Committee, should have been availed of to improve the thoroughfare, one of the

most congested and dangerous in the city. The Committee desired to place on record their high appreciation of the manner in which Mr. W. Roche of Roche's Stores met them in connection with concessions applied for from him, with the object of suitably rectifying the building line in Area No. 1 in Patrick Street, and to increase the width of Merchant Street on the western side.

Full sympathy was expressed with the improvements proposed by the Committee, and their willingness to make a concession of property towards the widening of Merchant Street, but their interests in the premises which they held there were insubstantial. Messrs. Cash and Co., Ltd., conceded a portion of their frontage in Maylor Street and their Patrick Street frontage, as was seen on reference to the accompanying map. Plans for the reconstruction of premises were submitted by Messrs. O'Regan, Scully-O'Connell, and Burton and Co., but had to be deferred until building lines in Areas 1, 2, and 4 were clearly assented to and defined. Several visits to the destroyed areas took place, and the City Engineer held frequent conferences with the architects concerned in each case, as also with proprietors of property. For a considerable time, some property owners adopted an attitude of opposition to the building lines laid down by the Committee in its early proceedings. This discouraging hostility led into intricate byways and time-wasting negotiations. Finally, the line for Areas 1 and 2 was only settled on 22nd July. Regarding Areas 3 and 4, there was one outstanding case of uncompromising opposition and positive refusal to make any concessions of ground to help achieve the Committee's idea of what they considered a suitable rectification of a very irregular building line and a most unsightly street façade in this block. Having regard to these circumstances, and the desire of several building owners to proceed with the erection of their buildings, the Committee felt constrained to arbitrarily fix new building lines for Areas 3 and 4, which they recommended to the Corporation for adoption.

The Reconstruction Committee expressed the hope that the Corporation, being the authoritative body on municipal

improvement in the city, would exercise its influence and adopt suitable means for the enforcement of strict adherence to these lines, and for the ultimate accomplishment of the street improvement which they involved. The question of the advisability of closing that portion of Elbow Lane between Cook Street and the Munster Arcade premises, also in the destroyed area, engaged the attention of the Committee. It was agreed to recommend that the necessary steps be taken with that object. The City Solicitor was instructed to ascertain on what terms the premises of the Misses Thompson at the corner of Winthrop Street could be acquired, and, if possible, to secure an option for the purchase of them. He reported that these premises were to be sold by public auction.

In the map attached to the report, the approximate positions of the destroyed premises with their old frontages were shown by a heavy black line, while the proposed new frontage line was indicated by a dotted line. It was noted that, as far as Area No. 1 was concerned, there would be no change in the frontage of the destroyed property. Regarding Area No. 2, a concession had been obtained from Messrs. Cash and Co. for the widening of Maylor Street at the St. Patrick Street end by approximately three feet, and at the Caroline Street corner by about ten inches. This secured a parallel width in this street for the length of Messrs. Cash and Co.'s premises. Again, on the Patrick Street front of these premises, an important concession was made, as shown on the map. Regarding Areas 3 and 4, the frontage lines in these cases were very much in need of rectification to redeem them from their present unsightly irregularities. It was obvious from the map what an improvement was possible by rebuilding these blocks to the dotted line running straight from a rounded corner of Messrs. Forrest's to Winthrop Street. The circular treatment at this latter point, approximately between the points A and B, was tentative and subject to adjustment of ground to be given and taken between the Corporation and the owners adjacent to this corner. The Committee felt they could do no better than submit the following views, drawn up by the City Engineer, for official record in a review of the fire and its consequences.

The City Engineer (Mr. Delany) reported that, in the work of reconstruction, there could be no doubt that exceptional opportunities for improvements existed, categorised into three heads: 1. Façade effects, 2. Building line improvement or rectification, and 3. Street widening. In his view, there was no scope for new thoroughfare formation or street re-planting works, except by the costly acquisition and demolition of expensive property. He mentioned that he had held conferences, both individually and collectively, with the architects of the city, practically all of whom were engaged by various firms and proprietors, and there was general agreement as to the desirability of treating the restoration work in a manner becoming the opportunity and achieving the effects, both artistic and utilitarian, which this portion of the city called for.

Having regard to the magnitude and importance of the work of restoration, he pointed out that it should be realised that, as there ought to be some authoritative source of control, the guardianship of the public interest and welfare in this problem of reconstruction must be accepted and asserted by the Corporation, and would be assented to by those concerned. Therefore, as a means of giving direction to a policy for the appropriate restoration of the destroyed area, it was advisable that the Corporation resolve upon certain central conditions, including that the Corporation should be in a proper position, under proper authority, and where such mode of procedure might be advised by the City Solicitor as proper, to purchase, exchange or substitute ground for the purpose of widening or otherwise improving streets in connection with the reconstruction of the area recently destroyed by fire.

Furthermore, he highlighted that the building lines must be strictly adhered to as regulating the development of plans, whether for temporary or permanent buildings. All temporary buildings should be erected on their sites within or on—but not beyond—the old frontage boundary lines. All permits for temporary or emergency structures should, it was articulated, cover a period which the City Engineer, in his

discretion, might deem desirable to fix, and the building owner should apply to the city Corporation for an extension if necessary, stating reasons. It was expressed that all new building restorations or alterations to buildings within the area ought to be designed and constructed to secure proper amenity on the frontage of the street on which such buildings abutted. Where there was any tendency to incongruity in external design, irregularity in frontage line, or want of harmony in materials, reasonable amendments should be made to plans and designs as advised by the Corporation's consultants. Any difference or dispute should be settled by arbitration. It was opined that the Corporation should endeavour to facilitate reconstruction by waiving or relaxing bye-laws where feasible or desirable. If, after two years, the rebuilding or restoration of destroyed premises had not commenced, or if commenced was left unfinished, the Corporation might acquire the site by appropriate procedure. He observed that the restoration problem was intricate, with opportunities and difficulties, and its unprecedented character called for special administrative facilities and some diversion from ordinary lines of procedure. The desired improvements could only be achieved by the parties concerned adopting a sound policy of public spirit in the public interest.

He expressed confidence that the proprietors of the lately destroyed property would appreciate their obligation to assist, both individually and collectively, the civil authorities and their architects and advisers in making the work of restoration and the incidental improvements a success. He hoped that when the plans and specifications stage was reached, the owners and architects would introduce Irish materials in the final and permanent restoration work or in temporary or tentative operations of re-establishment. The Committee strongly supported this policy for the introduction of Irish materials in rebuilding work, suggesting that the Corporation express and promulgate a fixed policy supporting Irish industry in this local reconstruction. He cautioned that each architect would design fronts according to their own artistic sense, which might result in incongruities in height and treatment and variety in materials. Without a

well-coordinated and unified scheme of treatment for the frontage as a whole, or for individual frontage areas so closely related as Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4, aggressively bizarre effects might result. Without standards of height, buildings of one storey might be placed next to those of three or four storeys, making balance, symmetry, unity, and harmony difficult to achieve under individual design. It was also noted that, since this report was written, the architects concerned in the rebuilding of the premises in Area No. 5 had collaborated and practically agreed on a symmetrical and unified design for the façade of this block, and were negotiating with their several clients for approval.[13]

In September 1921, an important meeting of the Cork Corporation, discussing the topic of rebuilding a burnt-out city centre, took place. It was highlighted that the following resolution passed at the Cork and District Trades Council at a recent meeting was received by the city council:

> *"Resolved, that we call on the Reconstruction Committee to use their endeavours with the Corporation to acquire Thompson's in order to expedite the building scheme in the No. 5 area, as the proposed idea of closing Robert Street would occupy legislation over a very considerable period and would entail enormous expenditure. We have come to this conclusion after consultation with experts."*

A deputation from the Trades Council appeared before the meeting in connection with it, and Mr. George Nason (President) spoke of the unemployment at present prevailing in all trades, and said there was a lot of unnecessary delay in the reconstruction scheme. He understood there was a hitch regarding some areas, but places such as Grant's and the corner of Prince's Street could also be proceeded with immediately. The city Corporation had also passed money for temporary offices, and they might take on the work so as to provide employment.[14]

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[13] *Cork Examiner 30/8/1921*

[14] *Cork Examiner 26/9/1921*

At a November 1921 meeting of the Committee, Alderman/ Councillor Beamish presided. A report from the City Engineer stated that the immediate purpose of the White Cross Committee regarding their work at the Lough is the reclamation of a considerable area of ground outside the water area, with a view to the same being developed into an ornamental suburban recreation ground or park. He submitted a suggestive layout plan for this, which he estimated would cost £4,400, and added that the White Cross Committee had applied to have two horses per day supplied by the Corporation while the reclamation work is in progress.

Mr. Allen remarked that before the Lough was finished, it would cost about £20 a foot. Mr. Fitzpatrick proposed that three trustees be elected by the Corporation, namely the Lord Mayor, Councillor French, and Father Cahalane. He thought they would have no trouble in securing funds from the White Cross. Mr. Mahony asked about having the Chairman, Alderman Beamish, also as one of the trustees. The Chairman enquired what the trustees would be elected to do. Mr. Fitzpatrick said to take charge of the monies. In the meantime, he would like the Corporation to take the matter in hand, the same as with Fitzgerald Park. Mr. Horgan asked if it was clear that the Corporation was not expected to provide any money for the reclamation of the Lough. The Chairman replied, that, provided they have it. Mr. Horgan commented that the expenditure was very large, and he did not think the citizens would approve of that. Mr. Fitzpatrick responded that he did not believe the Corporation would lose anything by it except for the two horses. Mr. Horgan asked if there was any legal liability in connection with the reclamation scheme. The City Solicitor said if the Corporation were to undertake works at the Lough, the money should be provided in the half-yearly estimates. So far, no provision had been made, and the estimates would be coming on shortly, at which time it would be necessary to consider making provision for the reclamation of the Lough. He suggested that Mr. Fitzpatrick's proposition should be made by way of notice of motion. Mr. Fitzpatrick agreed to

this course, and the question of supplying two horses was referred to the Departmental Committee. Mr. Forde asked what had already been paid for horses. The Secretary replied £150 altogether.

The Engineer further reported that the best manner in which the Mardyke stream could be improved would be to remove all silt from the bottom, form a concrete invert, repair the side walls, and cover the stream over in concrete, which would add to the width of the walk, estimating the cost of the work at £2,700. Mr. Allen asked if Messrs. Beamish and Crawford would contribute to the cost of the work. The Chairman said that if the work could be done at a reasonable amount, his firm would be prepared to contribute a certain proportion. He thought the scheme suggested was not advisable as it was too expensive and suggested that a more economical scheme be drawn up by the Engineer for flushing the sewer and diverting the water into the main stream. This was agreed to. The Engineer also reported that in its present condition the weir at Sunday's Well Boat Club would not withstand the heavy floods of the coming winter, but it could be kept in position by forming an abutment of boulder stones at the low water side. The City Solicitor advised that ownership of the weir is not vested in the Corporation, and they are therefore not responsible for repairing same; however, as the Corporation uses the river above the weir for the deposit of sewage matter, it is clearly in their interest that a sufficient depth of water should be maintained and that the necessary repairs to the weir should be carried out. For this reason, the attention of the Distilleries Co., who presumably have a substantial interest therein, should be requested to carry out the necessary works, although they cannot be compelled to do so. It was agreed to write to the Cork Distilleries Co. pointing out the condition of the weir, and to intimate to them that if they wished to make a gift of the weir to the Corporation, they would put the place in repair for the safety of the public. Mr. French said, as they were on that matter, he would like to know if there was any action they could take regarding the accident which caused Mr. O'Leary to lose his life. He suggested that the Secretary write to the owner of the property with a view to compelling him

to do something to prevent a recurrence of such a dangerous incident. It was a very dangerous place.[15]

At a December 1921 meeting of the Public Works Committee, Mr. Allen drew attention to the very bad condition of the roads, due not to slackness on the part of the workmen, who he knew were doing their best, but to a shortage of materials, and because the men employed were insufficient to cope with the work. Mr. Horgan said the footpaths were also, in his view, very bad and muddy. The Chairman remarked that this question had been discussed at the last meeting. In reply to a member, the City Engineer said they would expend £81 in connection with the waterworks and £250 on public works. Mr. Horgan proposed that they expend £250 on the work on the streets, etc. Mr. Allen asked if they could not increase the grant. Mr. Allen suggested that the amount be increased to £400. Now that they had peace, the best way they could celebrate it was to give the unemployed a little work. Mr. Horgan then proposed that the sum be £400, and this was agreed to, the men to be employed by the Departmental Committee and the City Engineer, and the work to be commenced as soon as possible. The City Engineer was directed to prepare an estimate of repairing flags broken by beer barrels opposite a public house near St. Luke's Cross; a bill to be sent to the brewers for damages. It was decided to summon a special meeting for Friday at 3.30 to consider the estimated income and expenditure for the half-year ending March 31st, 1922. A letter was received from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union requesting that their members be paid on Friday at 5 p.m., as hitherto, instead of on Saturday at 12.30 as at present. On the motion of Mr. Allen, seconded by Mr. Day, the request was granted. The meeting decided to refer to grant the renewed application of Messrs. Guy and Co. for permission to erect a 31-foot advertising hoarding on Mr. Green's premises at 31 feet of Fernhurst Avenue, in lieu of one which they removed from Bathfield, or failing the same,

[15] *Cork Examiner 3/11/1921*

on Mr. Donovan's premises on the same road, for which they had given permission.[16]

In January 1922, at a meeting of the Cork District Trades and Labour Council, Mr. Weldon said there was no reason why building should not have started then. The leases for some of those huts were due to expire on the 1st of the following month; this had been laid down by the Reconstruction Committee, and it was the duty of the Council, in his view, to use every means at its disposal to ensure that the terms of those leases were carried out.[17]

In early February 1922, at a meeting of the Reconstruction Committee of Cork Corporation, the Chairman stated that some action should be taken in the near future regarding rebuilding efforts. He believed it was incumbent on the owners of the destroyed properties, who were organised, to bring the full influence of their organisation to bear in order to secure funding for reconstruction. He stressed that the sooner rebuilding began, the better. He also highlighted the risk of delays: within twelve months, large-scale housing schemes were likely to commence, which could lead to a labour shortage. At that point, owners of destroyed buildings might find it difficult to secure workers for their projects. He then asked the Acting Town Clerk of the city to read recent correspondence.

One letter was from Mr. Thomas Mulcahy of J. Lyons & Co., Ltd., stating that they had received £52,406 from insurance for stock losses and £23,388 for premises. However, this amount was entirely inadequate for rebuilding, as they had been underinsured at the time. After meeting existing obligations and deductions, only £16,658 remained available for reconstruction. They intended to lodge a claim for compensation under the Recorder's decree, in accordance with a notice from the Secretary of the Provisional Government, and hoped to be paid in due course. They

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[16] *Cork Examiner 8/12/1921*

[17] *Cork Examiner 14/1/1922*

expressed willingness to proceed with rebuilding as soon as the situation was clarified and requested the Corporation or the Reconstruction Committee to do what they could to expedite the matter. They also clarified the insurance figures to dispel public misunderstanding and noted that the scale of new construction would depend on the final compensation amount, which would also inform the building plans and specifications. The Acting Town Clerk then read a letter from the Cork Chamber of Commerce. The Secretary had acknowledged the Corporation's correspondence and explained that compensation awards were part of a broader settlement between the Irish and British governments. While no date for initial payments could yet be given, it was hoped these would begin soon, possibly with interim payments where full settlements were not yet possible. Despite ongoing challenges, the Provisional Government aimed to support the business community in Cork and minimise inconvenience. Alderman Cosgrave added that Mr. Griffith had forwarded the Corporation's letter to his department. Efforts were ongoing to recover all compensation awards made against the Crown forces from the British Government. The Chairman then posed the question of how to effectively apply pressure to have advance payments made to those affected by the burnings. He proposed forming a small committee with representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, the Property Owners' Association, and the trade and labour organisations. Mr. Kelleher noted that Sir Hamar Greenwood had promised to make a statement on the matter in the House of Commons, and the Chairman mentioned that the Strickland Report would not be published.

Mr. Griffin endorsed the Chairman's proposal, stating that owners were ready to begin rebuilding permanent structures as soon as circumstances allowed. Speaking on behalf of his own firm, Cash & Co., he said they had already erected some permanent and temporary buildings at significant cost. He believed the suggested committee could help correct the misperception that businesses were unwilling to rebuild and would be effective in applying pressure on the Provisional Government. He argued that the Cork burnings should be treated as a unique case, separate from other incidents of

destruction around the country, particularly since the damage had been caused by Crown forces. Therefore, Cork's compensation claims should be prioritised. Mr. Biggane affirmed that every effort would be made to influence the Irish Government to release the necessary funds. Mr. Crowley formally proposed the formation of the committee suggested by the Chairman, with representatives from the trades, the Reconstruction Committee, each Chamber of Commerce, and the Lord Mayor representing the Corporation. Their first step would be to approach the Minister of Finance, noting that the claims related to the December 11–12 burnings were exceptional. Mr. McCarthy, representing organised labour, expressed a concern without offering a formal amendment. He asked whether property owners were making any progress in drafting reconstruction plans, warning that, without this, workers would remain idle until the Government obtained compensation from the British authorities.[18]

At the meeting of the Cork and District Trades' Council in February, Mr Nason, President, who chaired the meeting, stated that a deputation had been formed from the Reconstruction Committee and was submitted to the Council in February 1922. As the minutes recorded, a division had taken place, but he was pleased to say that the Council had done wisely in allowing delegates to represent them on the deputation that approached Mr Michael Collins. Altogether, there were nine members present, representing the Chambers of Commerce, property owners, Trades' Council, and the Corporation. They met Mr Collins in Dublin the previous day. Mr Barry M. Egan presented the case for the Corporation, while both Mr Barry and Mr Nason put forward the case for labour. This did not require many words, as Mr Collins was already aware of the situation. On behalf of the Provisional Government, he assured them that the money for rebuilding Cork city centre was at hand, and that he was prepared to hand it to the Corporation on corporate responsibility. Any sum of money required for rebuilding Cork city centre was at the disposal of the Provisional

[18] *Evening Echo 14/2/1922*

Government, but would be recovered through financial arrangements with the Government in Great Britain. Regarding liabilities, the Irish Government should pay for their own losses. Anything burned by the Irish people would be paid for by them, while anything destroyed by Crown forces would be covered by England. Greenwood admitted that Cork was burned by Crown forces, and the English Government held itself responsible for rebuilding Cork, prepared to make ample compensation. This compensation would be assessed as the work progressed. Any barracks burned in Ireland would be accounted for against any Irish destruction, but concerning the burning of Cork, the English Government took responsibility and was prepared to provide for it. The Provisional Government was ready to grant any amount of money necessary—up to two million pounds if needed—and a commission was to be set up to consider the claims, whether exaggerated or not, but this would not delay the rebuilding.

Mr Collins told them he was prepared to grant the money immediately on the responsibility of the Cork Corporation. When Mr Nason asked what "immediately" meant, since some formalities might take six to nine months, Mr Collins replied somewhat sarcastically that "the bank is closed today," but he assured him the money would be available next Monday if the Corporation took responsibility. If the Corporation did not act, it would be up to the Trades Council to ensure that others who would act were put in place. Work should begin at once, as every member of the Provisional Government assured them they were ready to grant the funds immediately. Mr Nason asked why there should be any delay. He also insisted that thousands of trowels should be at work by the following Wednesday, with thousands employed, unless it was a case of "wait and see" again. If that was the attitude, the Trades Council would denounce it and insist that the Corporation take up the issue. He expressed frustration over the thousands of idle men and the urgency of securing the funds at once. This was his report on the delegation's work, and he believed the Council would agree it was well worth lending the delegation to Dublin alongside the Corporation, Chambers of Commerce, and

others. They now knew where they stood—plenty of money was available to them. All they had to do was ask for it from the proper source, and it was there.

Mr Walsh enquired whether the city Corporation was to guarantee that the money would be granted to the owners of the buildings, or if individual owners would have to seek funds themselves. The Chairman responded that the Corporation would be the responsible party for carrying out the guarantee to the Provisional Government, but they would not be responsible beyond that. Mr Collins requested that a committee of inquiry be set up, and when it was established how much money was needed, it would be granted in stages and dispensed through the Corporation. Mr Walsh understood that ownership and disbursement of the money rested with the Corporation, and the Chairman confirmed this. Mr Barry, who accompanied Mr Nason on the deputation, endorsed the report.[19]

At a Cork Corporation meeting in late February 1922, discussing the rebuilding of Cork City, he Lord Mayor said that he quite agreed with a view expressed by Councillor B. M. Egan that no unnecessary delay should be caused, but on the other hand, it was equally important that they should not adopt any panicky measures. The money in question (sourced for rebuilding) was not being given as a grant; the money was the whole or part of the money due to the people in Patrick Street and other places who had been burned out. They had, in the ordinary course, secured their decrees for their claims, but he thought that all of the cases which were undefended would be subject to some revision. First of all, he said, they would have to deal with repayment; secondly, the payment in whole or in part was a payment between the responsible party and the British Government and the owners of the burned buildings. It was simply a question of the Government paying these people the money due to them. At that time, they did not know what was expected from the Corporation, and they would have to consider to what extent the Corporation was to be involved in the matter. The

[19] *Evening Echo 24/2/1922*

Government was not entitled to any guarantee. The court decrees were there, and it was purely a matter of paying over the money. He thought it would be better first to wait until the matter had been reduced to concrete shape by the Reconstruction Committee, which was responsible for the deputation that went to Dublin. If necessary, they could have a special meeting of the Council called after the meetings of the Reconstruction Committee. It would then be a matter of finance, estimates, plans, and the keeping of accounts.[20]

A special meeting of the Cork Corporation was held in March of 1922 to consider the report of the Reconstruction Committee, regarding the rebuilding of the destroyed areas of the city. The Lord Mayor presided, and numerous Aldermen and Councillors were present, including Liam De Roiste, S. O'Sullivan, E. Coughlan, M. O'Donovan, Fred Murray, D. Lucey, O'Riordan, and many others.

At the start of the proceedings, Sir John Scott submitted a requisition to the Lord Mayor, signed by several council members, requesting a special meeting to reconsider a previous resolution from 25th February. This resolution involved rescinding a notice served on Messrs. Henry Ford and Son Ltd., and withdrawing a letter from the Acting Town Clerk to demonstrate the Corporation's willingness to facilitate the company. The Lord Mayor responded that this matter would arise again. After the Reconstruction Committee's report was read, Sir John Scott expressed the view that payments to owners of decrees should be made proportionately rather than equally. Mr. Egan cautioned that equal payments could delay smaller buildings, while the Lord Mayor insisted the equal division was intended so all buildings could progress simultaneously. John Horgan supported payments based on a percentage to ensure fairness. B. M. Egan pointed out that payments would be made upon architects' certificates and only after the ground floors were completed. Daniel Horgan believed adopting the report would cause no injustice and formally moved for its adoption, which Mr. M. Egan seconded. The Secretary read a telegram

[20] *Cork Examiner 27/2/1922*

from the Law Agent stating he could not provide a definite update in time for the meeting. Alderman De Roiste had also expressed some personal disappointment, given that the Reconstruction Committee had not consulted him while he was in Dublin, as he had immediately raised the issue with Mr. Collins there. Collins had suggested that £50,000 or £100,000 could be made available immediately, with the possibility of a quarter of a million becoming available within weeks or months. De Roiste proposed forming a small committee comprising the City Engineer, City Treasurer, City Solicitor, representatives of the Corporation, and a representative from the Provisional Government, with auditors from both parties to expedite the start of work. He believed this committee could begin working within days, possibly by Monday, with £50,000 becoming available and was placed with the City Treasurer. The Lord Mayor acknowledged this aligned with the Corporation's previous decisions, emphasising that no delay had occurred and that the Reconstruction Committee had done all it could. He agreed a special subcommittee could be appointed but noted there had been no clear scheme before them yet. He hoped the visit of Mr. Galvin to Dublin would soon clarify what was required. He reassured that the Reconstruction Committee had not wasted time. Sir John Scott supported Alderman De Roiste's suggestion and mentioned hearing that £100,000 had arrived in Cork for this scheme, though the Lord Mayor stated it had not yet been received.

Mr. Neenan proposed appointing a subcommittee including the Lord Mayor, Aldermen O'Sullivan and Murray, and Councillors Sean Nolan, Barry Egan, W. Ellis, and Sean French. Sir John Scott added Alderman De Roiste's name to the list. Some debate arose over whether the committee should represent only the predominant party or the whole Council. Sir John Scott recommended a committee of the whole Council to avoid political bias, stressing that the matter concerned the entire city. Alderman O'Sullivan proposed limiting the committee to seven members including Alderman De Roiste, but De Roiste declined to join. The proposal was seconded by Alderman Fitzpatrick. Sir John Scott reiterated his preference for a committee including the

entire Council, arguing that politics should not influence the allocation of public funds and that all councillors, representing significant ratepayers, deserved to know what was happening. Mr. D. Horgan agreed, noting that previous narrow committee appointments had caused difficulties and urging unity for the city's good, which drew applause. Mr. Egan also raised concerns that the predominant party monopolised the committee and suggested organised Labour should have representation. Sir John Scott agreed that employers and ratepayers should be included, with the Lord Mayor noting that ratepayers were represented on any Corporation committee by default. Egan added that while a small committee might work more efficiently, the key question was whether the Corporation could best serve the interests of those burned out through a small subcommittee or the full Council. He assumed the Provisional Government would have some representation since they were funding the project.

Sir John Scott reaffirmed his preference for a full Council committee. Mr. Neenan proposed adding M. Egan and J. Kelleher (senior) to the list, noting their sympathy for Labour and that they were not from the predominant party. The Lord Mayor sympathised with the desire for full Corporation involvement but cautioned that the whole Corporation would be unwieldy for detailed work, though special Council meetings could be convened for subcommittee reports. Mr. Mulligan, as the ultimate authority, supported a full Council committee, while Mr. Gamble questioned if the nominated members were those who had worked on the Departmental Committee and whether the minority should accept this. The minority suggested they might as well walk out if excluded. Mr. J. Horgan criticised the Corporation for being one of sub-committees, lamenting the excessive number appointed. The Lord Mayor concluded by saying that the subcommittee would handle clerical and office work related to distributing funds and that the Reconstruction Committee would continue its role. The meeting reflected ongoing tensions

about political representation, efficiency, and transparency in managing the city's reconstruction efforts.[21]

Also in March, a special meeting of the Public Works Committee was held the to consider the matter of the already published report of the City Engineer concerning the subsidence of the pavement over the archway in Patrick Street, opposite the Pavilion Theatre. Alderman Beamish (Vice-Chairman) presided, and among those present included the Lord Mayor. The sitting's Chairman explained that the Committee needed to decide whether to secure the arch and side walls by using timber bracing and strutting or to opt for a more permanent solution such as concrete. Timber would naturally be the cheaper option, but adopting the concrete method would require opening the wooden pavement along a portion of the street. The City Engineer added that this would involve enlarging the nearest manhole by three or four feet.

When asked about the cost, the Chairman estimated that the concrete wall would cost between £500 and £650, while the timber scheme would be about £250. Alderman O'Sullivan inquired whether, if an expert were appointed to propose a new drainage scheme for the city, the work could be done gradually as needs arose. The City Engineer confirmed this was possible. He recalled that about thirty years earlier, a specialist named Mr. Cotton, an engineer with the Local Government Board, had been brought in to report on the matter, and the Dublin Corporation had engaged a consultant to work with their City Engineer during the promotion of their scheme. It was then agreed to recommend to the Council the appointment of an expert to consult with the City Engineer and submit a new drainage plan. On Mr. Horgan's motion, the Committee instructed the City Engineer to make safe the unstable portions of the archway pending the implementation of the new scheme. Mr. French expressed distrust in outside experts and urged that plenty of local engineers knew the city better than strangers. It was also agreed to recommend to the Council

[21] *Evening Echo 6/3/1922*

that two prices be sought for the best scheme in order to encourage competition.

Alderman O'Sullivan referred to the Engineer's report, which stated that the archway under Patrick Street had been damaged by heavy military traffic. He noted that Dáil Éireann had issued a notice some time earlier requesting all persons with claims against the British Government to submit them. Since the damage was caused by heavy military vehicles, resulting in a loss to the ratepayers, he suggested that a full claim for the damage be submitted. This claim should be sent to the Secretary of the County Council, who would then forward it to Dáil Éireann. The City Engineer responded that provisions for this had already been made. The Chairman added that, as arranged at a previous meeting, a deputation had visited the Trimbath's Lane National School and met Canon O'Sullivan. They observed that there were ruins and a square adjacent to the school, which might be suitable for the construction of a new school with a better approach. Finally, instructions were given to the City Engineer and City Solicitor to investigate the ownership of the ruins in the area with a view to developing a scheme for improved school accommodation and access.[22]

In early May 1922, at a meeting of the Reconstruction Committee of Cork Corporation, at which Mr. B. Egan served as chair, several applications were received from leaseholders in the destroyed area for grants out of the sum recently forwarded by the Provisional Government for reconstruction work. It was pointed out that some of the applications were not in order, as the conditions set forth in the scheme under which grants could be made had not been complied with by the applicants. The City Solicitor advised that applications for advances should include the decree for compensation submitted to the Secretary at least three days before the meeting at which the claim was to be considered. Additionally, sufficient details to support the expenditure should be submitted to the committee for certification, both by them and by the representatives of the Provisional

[22] *Evening Echo 9/3/1922*

Government. A certificate was also presented by Messrs. Chillingworth and Levie, architects, for the sum of £4,252, stated to have been expended on the reconstruction of certain premises in Patrick Street. It was agreed that this sum be certified for payment, subject to the production of the decree for compensation and to the amounts being checked and certified by both the City Engineer and the engineer appointed by the Provisional Government. Furthermore, the decree relating to the destruction of the building was to be lodged with the committee. It was also emphasised that no application of any sort could be entertained unless it related to buildings for which plans had been sanctioned by the Corporation. It was agreed that the public's attention be drawn to this requirement. Finally, the committee resolved to apply to the Provisional Government for a further grant of £20,000, which was the amount estimated as required by 1st June.[23]

At a meeting of the Reconstruction Committee in July 1922, Mr. Nason said they wanted to know why the work of reconstruction was not progressing. They could not understand, he said, why things were being held up so badly, and he claimed that the city Corporation were the biggest offenders of all. He felt the Corporation ought to set an example. There was the City Hall and the Carnegie Library, where work could have begun already. Surely the Corporation was not so devoid of funds that it could not start work and provide employment to the men who had been walking the streets of Cork idle for the past eighteen months, with themselves, their wives, and families starving. He maintained that it was up to the Corporation to start work immediately. Some of the big merchants in the town could also start rebuilding if they were inclined to do so. If work was not started, he claimed that the Labour Party would have to take action. Mr. Weldon also spoke and endorsed what Mr. Nason had said.

On the motion of Mr. Weldon, seconded by Mr. Kelleher, it was decided that a deputation wait on the parties concerned

[23] *Cork Examiner 11/5/1922*

with a view to having work started. The Chairman responded that he did not think it was a fair criticism of the Corporation, considering the fact that the Corporation had been doing all it could to support the reconstruction work. It was well known, he explained, that the City Hall and the Carnegie Library were being held over deliberately as a form of reserve project—so that when other devastated areas were rebuilt, these works could begin, ensuring a continuity of employment. He believed the Corporation, when approached, would give Labour the same sympathetic consideration it had always received from the present administration.[24]

At a Public Works Committee meeting in July 1922, the Chairman (Beamish) submitted a report on the proposed street scavenging scheme. He explained that the existing system for general street cleaning in the City of Cork was uncoordinated and had caused considerable dissatisfaction among citizens. Consequently, the Public Works Committee aimed to reorganise and develop a more efficient method of managing street cleaning to provide a better, more economical service and improve the city's cleanliness, which was currently unsatisfactory. One major difficulty was finding suitable dumping grounds for accumulated refuse. Available sites were often located too far away, and the roads leading to them were steep or poorly maintained. This meant that each cart could carry only about 12 hundredweight, and the distance to the dumping ground caused slow and prolonged cartage. The Chairman believed that if a new system could be introduced to overcome these obstacles, both public health and economic benefits would result. At the time, the Public Works Committee controlled the collection and removal of street mud and manure, while the Public Health Committee was responsible for domestic scavenging. Trade scavenging should have been the responsibility of individual shopkeepers and householders, but it had partially fallen to the Public Works Committee. Since householders were legally bound to manage this duty but often failed to do so properly, the current system was disorganised and inefficient. The

[24] *Evening Echo 5/7/1922*

Committee believed this situation required careful reconsideration. It was recommended that all these aspects be unified under one central authority responsible for the entire operation. The report noted that the reduction in street staff from winter to summer work was about 6 per cent, while the number of carriers was reduced by 18 per cent. This indicated that the street staff was not reduced proportionately to the carriers. The reduction in staff during summer was mainly due to lower rainfall, which decreased the volume of water in the loads to be removed. Average winter rainfall was about 3.43 inches, compared to 2.55 inches in summer—a difference of 0.88 inches or 25.6 per cent. It was therefore reasonable to expect that the reduction in winter to summer staff should be less than 9 per cent, especially considering that during heavy rainfalls the loads removed could contain up to 80 per cent water compared with drier summer loads.

The report acknowledged that some older men employed by the city staff, who had devoted many years of service, were no longer able to work a full day due to their age. It was suggested that their workload be distributed among younger men to maintain average daily productivity without overburdening the older workers. The collection and removal of general refuse, together with street manure, was carried out by eleven carriers. Meanwhile, 25 men swept the lanes and assisted with loading the carriers' carts for both the general collection and lane refuse. By law, the removal of trade refuse was supposed to be the responsibility of individual traders, but this duty was often performed irregularly by Public Works staff, and not to the required standard. It was believed that in many cases, individual traders found the removal of their refuse an unreasonable daily demand. The report suggested that city traders might be exempted from this duty if they agreed to provide suitable facilities to the Corporation under specific by-laws. This proposal was unanimously supported. The City Engineer reported that the trade scavenging slightly contributed towards the cost, with the estimated cost of wood removal being about £1,200. The report concluded that a systematic collection of paper, straw, and miscellaneous refuse along a

70-yard stretch could be effectively managed, preventing the unsightly scattering of rubbish by wind. The proposed plans were considered to be for the benefit and health of the citizens, and work was underway to secure an appropriate site for the operation.[25]

A conference was held in Cork city during August 1922 between members of the Cork Reconstruction Committee and representatives of the Government, with a view to taking steps to secure the relief of unemployment supports in the city. Proposals were submitted which, broadly speaking, met with the approval of both sides. The entire matter was to be fully discussed at the next meeting of the Corporation, where the proposals mentioned would be formally submitted for consideration. Those present at the conference, representing the city, included Councillor W. Ellis (Deputy Lord Mayor), Councillor R. Day, T.D., Alderman Liam de Róiste, T.D., Councillor B. M. Egan, Councillor J. Kelleher, and Mr. James Barry.[26]

A special meeting of the Cork Corporation was held in September 1922, at the request of the Reconstruction Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the Committee's recommendation that temporary structures erected in the burned-out areas be closed unless the owners proceeded immediately to construct permanent buildings. The Town Clerk also read the report of the General Reconstruction Committee from its meeting on the 13th inst. A sub-committee comprising the Deputy Lord Mayor, Messrs. George Nason, J. Barry, and M. O'Herlihy was appointed to meet with architects and property owners in the burned-out areas who had submitted plans for reconstruction. These plans had been approved by the Corporation, and the objective was to urge the commencement of work to alleviate the city's high unemployment. The deputation, with the exception of Mr. Nason, who was unavailable, met with several architects and

[25] *Cork Examiner 6/7/1922*

[26] *Cork Examiner 17/8/1922*

property owners. Messrs. James McMullen and Chillingworth and Nevill, architects, reported that tenders were being invited for Mr. E. O'Connell's premises on North Main Street, and that rebuilding had begun on the Ballyhooley Road. Plans had also been prepared for Mr. Patrick Crowley's building on Oliver Plunkett Street, though that project was currently delayed due to unresolved issues. Dr. Winder informed them that work on the Blackthorn House would begin immediately.

Messrs. O'Flynn and O'Connor, architects, stated that tenders were to be invited for the reconstruction of Mr. O'Sullivan's premises (the New York House), and that a contract had already been awarded for the rebuilding of the Sinn Féin Hall on Shandon Street. Tenders would also soon be sought for the Saxone Boot Company premises. Plans for the reconstruction of Messrs. Egan and Son's premises were near completion. The sub-committee also met with Sir Stanley Harrington, Chairman of Messrs. T. Lyons and Co., Ltd., who confirmed the company was ready to begin reconstruction as soon as they were informed of their compensation amount. Mr. E. Lysaght, a Local Government Inspector, promised to request that investigators be sent to Cork to expedite outstanding claims. Mr. Griffin, Secretary of Cash and Co., Ltd., and their architect, Mr. W. H. Hill, reported that instructions had been issued to expedite the preparation of their plans, expected to be completed shortly. Mr. P. B. Lillis, Managing Director of the Munster and Leinster Bank, also pledged support and said work would soon commence on part of their premises on Marlboro Street. Mr. C. Ford was similarly ready to begin reconstruction on his Oliver Plunkett Street premises. The sub-committee concluded that at least six firms in the affected area were prepared to start work immediately. Mr. Nason expressed strong dissatisfaction, stating that repeated deputations to these firms had yielded little progress. The workers, he said, were losing patience with empty promises and the leniency extended by the Corporation had been abused. Temporary huts had no legal basis, and funds were available to commence rebuilding—at least three-fifths of the necessary capital. He stressed that workers did not wish to

close these huts, but without firm action, no real progress would be made.

The Chairman noted that some rebuilding had already begun, and that where it hadn't, the delay was likely the fault of builders rather than owners, as contracts had already been awarded. Mr. Nason countered that many wealthier firms were content to trade from huts, avoiding permanent reconstruction. He accused them of waiting for wage reductions, before beginning construction. Mr. Walsh remarked that nearly two years had passed since the fires, with minimal rebuilding done. It was mostly poorer traders who had made any effort; wealthier ones had done little and were suspected of deliberately delaying to manipulate labour costs. Mr. Barry condemned what he regarded as the lack of genuine effort as a disgrace, noting that money meant for reconstruction was idle in banks while workers went semi-starving. He insisted that the workers would no longer be "bluffed" and that drastic action was needed to enforce civic duty. The Chairman clarified that at least two of the firms (Cash and Co., and T. Lyons and Co.) now knew their compensation amounts and should therefore begin work. Responding to Mr. Kelleher (senior), the City Solicitor confirmed that the temporary huts were against the Corporation's bye-laws. If the Corporation revoked permits, it could expect legal challenges. Mr. Kelleher condemned absentee councillors and contrasted the effort of poorer shopkeepers with that of the rich. He refuted claims that enforcement would create more unemployment, arguing that firms kept trading not for public good but for profit. The current delays had also impacted timber merchants, whose staff were now on reduced hours.

Mr. Kelleher moved that no further permits be granted, asserting that reconstruction work must proceed to provide employment. His motion was seconded by Mr. Gamble and Alderman Higgins. Mr. P. Murphy supported the motion, criticising wealthy business owners who donated to charity but failed to contribute meaningfully by hiring workers and rebuilding. He dismissed claims that owners feared their new buildings might be burned again, citing Dublin property

owners who rebuilt without hesitation. He accused Cork firms of trying to starve workers into accepting lower wages.

Mr. Allen also supported the motion, recounting a distressing case of a mother scavenging pig offal to feed her children due to the lack of work. Mr. Forde queried the legality of withdrawing permits. The City Solicitor responded that although the Corporation had tolerated the huts, it was now within its rights to require their removal, but this would likely be contested. Mr. Kelleher concluded that the Corporation had indeed granted the permits, but the time had come to act. The Chairman declared the motion passed. Mr. Barry of the Cork Workers' Council sought clarification. The Chairman confirmed that the Town Clerk would notify property owners in the burned-out areas that the Corporation had decided to enforce building bye-laws immediately. Mr. Barry protested the absence of Mr. Barry Egan, then representative of the property owners, stating that it was his duty to attend and show leadership.[27]

Also in September, at a meeting of Cork Corporation, the Local Government Board conveyed their approval for the Corporation to acquire the Thomson's premises at the corner of Patrick Street and Winthrop Street, to widen the entrance to Winthrop Street. They also sanctioned the Corporation's proposal to obtain a loan of £7,500 for this purpose, to be repaid over seven years, with any compensation monies realised from decrees related to premises to be applied immediately towards reducing the loan. This matter was referred to the Public Works Committee.[28]

An opinion piece, as featured by the '*Evening Echo*' in October 1922, remarked that its readers would remember that in the earlier part of the year, considerable dissatisfaction had been expressed regarding the lack of energy shown in the reconstruction of the burned buildings in Cork city centre. Some blamed the property owners, others the Reconstruction

[27] *Evening Echo 19/9/1922*

[28] *Cork Examiner 23/9/1922*

Committee, and others the Corporation. Some leading spokesmen of the Corporation denied responsibility and sought to place the blame on the Provisional Government. A deputation was sent to Dublin to interview the late Chairman of the Provisional Government, who had very clearly told the deputation that the Government was prepared to finance the reconstruction. A week or two passed, and some municipal impatience was expressed because the Government had not immediately provided all the money. The Government then sent Mr Fawsitt, who had interviewed and brought together representatives of the city Corporation, the property owners, and the workers. It was suggested that a business-like arrangement was reached, under which the Government undertook to advance £200,000 for constructive work actually done. This was regarded as a workable and common-sense arrangement, and it was expected that building would proceed apace. The article suggested that, had the letter and spirit of this agreement been adhered to, at least a quarter of a million pounds would by that time have been spent on the work, and by the end of the financial year another quarter of a million. However, the editorial observed that only about £26,000 worth of reconstructive work had been executed, and it was expected that £110,000 more would meet all claims up to 1st April.

The editorial claimed that, allowing for the natural hesitation to expend money on work during the six weeks when the "Irregulars" (words of the newspaper) ruled Cork city, and the weeks immediately following, it remained clear to the editorial that more work could have been carried out if those involved had applied themselves with determination. The Government was not blamed by the editorial, as it had agreed to provide the money in 'regular instalments,' and these facilities had not been taken advantage of. The Corporation was criticised for setting a poor example to other owners of destroyed property. Although awarded large sums for the Municipal Buildings, the City Hall, and the Carnegie Library, the article asserted that the Corporation had allowed months to pass without beginning restoration. The editorial concluded that, naturally, matters would have run more smoothly were it not for the conduct of those

responsible for wasting much of the country's wealth and resources. Nonetheless, it was evident that, in its opinion, the National Army had the situation under control, and property owners needed not fear that buildings constructed then would be demolished again soon after. Given the circumstances, the editorial found it difficult to understand why rebuilding or even preparatory work had not been undertaken more widely. While not seeking to assign blame for the prevailing lack of energy, the editorial asserted that it was high time for more action to have been taken.[29]

In January 1923, during a meeting of the Public Works Committee, at which Councillor S. Daly presided, on the application of Councillor J. F. O'Sullivan, an order was made to have the lamp between the corner of Dominick Street and Ferry Hill re-lit. Similar orders were granted following requests from Councillor Nolan for St. Augustine Street, Councillor S. Mahony for Evergreen Street, Councillor J. Allen for Cattle Lane, Councillor D. Morgan for Montenotte, and Councillor Gamble for the lighting of North Gate Bridge.

Complaints regarding the condition of Porter's Lane and Wise's Lane, made by Councillors Forde and O'Callaghan respectively, were referred to the City Engineer. It was agreed to hold a special meeting of the Committee on the following week to consider the Vice-Chairman's report on street cleansing, along with the Engineer's report on the same subject. A complaint made by Councillor O'Callaghan concerning alleged misconduct occurring at night in the Mardyke was referred to the Civic Guard, and the caretaker for investigation. The Committee had also reviewed correspondence from the Secretary of the Harbour Commissioners, the Steam Packet Company, and the Clyde Shipping Company in relation to Councillor Horgan's complaint about the condition of Penrose Quay. Councillor Horgan explained that butter exporters had approached him with concerns, as the accumulation of mud on the quay was damaging the appearance of their goods. It was decided that

[29] *Cork Examiner 13/10/1922*

a committee would visit the site, and the Highway Superintendent was instructed to provide a report on the matter.[30]

A special meeting was also called in January, discussing the matter of street scavenging. The committee considered the recent proposal by the Vice-Chairman concerning the disposal of mud and refuse from the streets and lanes of the city. In connection with this, the City Engineer, Mr. J.P. Delany, submitted the following report:

> *"With reference to the recent proposal regarding the disposal of mud and refuse from the streets and lanes of the city, as outlined in the Vice-Chairman's suggestions, I have to report that the approximate cost, based on very rough estimates, would be about £17,000.*
>
> *This figure includes the provision of four suitable dumping stations in appropriate positions along the riverbanks, as well as four steam- or petrol-driven barges for removal of waste to the designated disposal site down the river, as suggested by the Chairman.*
>
> *As many important considerations arise—particularly concerning the nature and location of the dumping stations—I believe it would be beneficial for the Committee to visit the quays with me. This would allow for discussion and on-site evaluation of the proposed locations, and for me to describe the conditions and requirements at each one.*
>
> *The ultimate cost will largely depend on the sites selected and the nature of the constructional work involved.*
>
> *I remain, gentlemen,*
> *Your obedient servant,*
> *J.P. Delany,*
> *City Engineer."*

[30] *Cork Examiner 4/1/1923*

Mr. Horgan expressed concern, stating that the expenses would be overwhelming if the scheme were adopted. He firmly opposed proceeding with a project costing £17,000, especially under current economic conditions, saying, "This is no time to impose such a burden on the ratepayers." The Chairman had concurred. Mr. Morgan proposed that, since the City Engineer was unavoidably absent in Dublin, consideration of the scheme should be postponed until his return. This suggestion was agreed to by the other members. Mr. Forde commented that the Engineer's report was sparse and lacking in detail. However, he emphasised the urgent need for improvement in the current system of street cleaning, stating:

> "*We must get something done. Since we joined this Corporation, we have done absolutely nothing, and despite all our talk, conditions are more backward than ever.*"[31]

In February 1923, at a meeting of the Cork region of the Industrial Development Association (IDA), at which Mr. E. Sheehan BL presided, the Chairman stated that, while he fully understood that English or Scottish bricks were not specifically mentioned in the specification for projects, the wording nevertheless did not preclude their use. He expressed regret that public bodies, when spending public funds on public works, did not show greater commitment to ensuring their specifications prioritised the use of Irish materials—particularly when such materials were available from one or more Irish manufacturers at reasonably competitive prices.[32]

At a March meeting of the Committee, Mr. Barry, H.C., appeared before the Committee to urge the necessity of expediting the preliminary arrangements for the rebuilding of houses in and around the corner of Winthrop Street, so that the work could commence promptly. He explained that he and his colleagues were present, because they understood the matter was under the remit of the Public Works

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[31] *Cork Examiner 12/1/1923*

[32] *Cork Examiner 5/2/1923*

Committee. Mr. Barry stated that Messrs. Tylers and Cudmore were eager to begin construction, which further justified the urgency. Mr. O'Sullivan proposed that in districts where glass in public lamps was being continuously broken, the gas supply to those areas should be cut off for a fortnight. He argued that the Corporation needed to demonstrate efforts to protect public property, and maintained that the residents in those areas likely knew who the culprits were. Mr. Gamble objected, asking whether this policy would apply even if, for example, a stranger broke a lamp outside his door without his knowledge. He stated firmly that he would not accept being deprived of lighting in such a case. The Chairman noted that this proposal had already been passed at the last Committee meeting and was scheduled to be discussed at the next full Council meeting. Mr. Horgan raised concerns about the increasing frequency of cycling on the city footpaths, particularly in areas that had been recently concreted. He requested that the Civic Guard be notified and asked to take appropriate action. Returning to the topic of building works, the Chairman informed the Committee that, at a special meeting, they had passed a recommendation—subject to Council confirmation—to adopt the amended plans for Mr. Cudmore's premises. This recommendation was to come before Council on the 23rd.

A report from the City Analyst, Mr. D. J. O'Mahony, was then considered. It discussed the "British Thermal Unit" gas system, which the Analyst explained would result in increased heating efficiency. Mr. O'Sullivan remarked that while he was unfamiliar with the specifics of gas heating, the domestic gas supply throughout the city was notably poor, and widespread complaints had been received. In contrast, Mr. Horgan observed that the public lighting arrangements had significantly improved, a view with which Mr. Allen concurred. Mr. Giltinan, the Secretary, read a report from the City Engineer stating that 450 panes of glass in the city's street lamps had been broken during the two weeks ending on the 7th of the month—an increase of 48 incidents compared to the previous period.[33]

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[33] *Cork Examiner 8/3/1923*

At a Committee meeting in late March of 1923, regarding a proposal to erect a suitable ornamental railing around the boundary wall of University College's sports ground at the Mardyke, it was decided that a sub-committee would visit the site with Professor Merriman, President of the College, and report to the next meeting. Professor Merriman, who was in attendance, explained the circumstances under which the university authorities acquired the ground. He noted that financial constraints were a common issue facing all universities at present but stated his willingness to meet the sub-committee on site to discuss the railing. The Council was asked to reconsider a previous recommendation to sell 1,000 facing bricks—removed from the recently demolished Carnegie Free Library—to the Cork Gas Company for £5. Mr. Byrne explained the matter had been referred back because the bricks had been removed without the Council's formal consent. Mr. Allen pointed out that the Gas Company regularly purchased surplus materials from the Corporation for street repair work. The Chairman confirmed that the bricks had been valued before being paid for and removed. It was resolved that the price paid by the Gas Company was reasonable. Several tenders for the supply of stone for macadamising purposes were referred to the City Engineer for a report.[34]

At an April 1923, meeting of the Cork Corporation's Public Works Committee, Councillor Russell expressed concern regarding the unsatisfactory condition of the streets, highlighting the accumulation of waste and refuse across various thoroughfares. Despite the seriousness of the issue raised, no immediate action was taken by the Council. The City Solicitor reported on developments relating to the completion of the road through the Park, which had been constructed by Messrs. Ford and Son. He stated that he had met with Mr. Grace, the firm's manager, who confirmed that Ford and Son were willing to complete the remaining fifty yards of the road at cost price, provided the Corporation would cover the expense. This offer was met with general

[34] *Cork Examiner 22/3/1923*

approval, with Councillor O'Sullivan describing it as a very satisfactory arrangement. Councillor Horgan moved, and Councillor O'Sullivan seconded, that the Corporation accept the offer. Councillor Allen voiced opposition to the proposal, arguing that the Corporation should employ its own labourers for the task, particularly since many were currently without work. He emphasised that Corporation employees had the necessary skills and should be given the opportunity to prove their capability. He criticised recent comparisons between the Park road project and a Harbour Board job, which he claimed had been used for propaganda purposes. Councillor O'Sullivan defended the quality of Ford and Son's work, stating that it would be prudent to allow them to complete the project to maintain consistency and standard. The Chairman supported this view, noting the firm's possession of the appropriate equipment and experience.

Alderman Coughlan asked for an estimate of the cost, to which the City Solicitor responded that the approximate cost of completing the remaining portion would be around £600. He noted that while the completion was technically a Corporation responsibility, Henry Ford and Son's willingness to undertake the job at cost presented a favourable opportunity. Alderman Daly praised the quality of work previously completed by Ford and Son and supported allowing them to finish the job. However, Councillor Allen proposed an amendment that the Corporation's own workers carry out the task. The Chairman agreed to second this amendment, conditional upon receiving a cost estimate from the City Engineer. A vote was taken, with the amendment supported by the Chairman and Councillors Allen and Mahony. Those voting against included Alderman Daly, Alderman Coughlan, and Councillors Morgan and O'Sullivan. Councillor Russell abstained. The amendment was therefore defeated, and the original motion to allow Ford and Son to complete the work at cost was approved. Subsequently, a deputation from the Plasterers' Society appeared before the meeting to voice strong protest against the Council's decision. The Chairman assured them that the matter would be brought before the next Council meeting,

where they would have an opportunity to present their concerns in full.

Mr D. J. Giltinan, Secretary, then reported on an application from University College Cork (UCC) for a contribution towards the cost of erecting ornamental iron railings along the wall bounding the College sports field at the Mardyke. The total estimated cost of the railings was £800. Following a site visit by Vice-Chairman Councillor S. Daly and Councillors M. Walsh, S. Mahony, T. O'Neill, and O. Hynes, the Public Works Committee recommended that standing orders be suspended to consider the matter urgently. They proposed that the Corporation contribute £100 towards the project and that work proceed without delay, in order to generate much-needed employment. The amount was to be included in the following year's estimates. Councillor Mahony proposed, and Councillor Walsh seconded, the adoption of the recommendation. However, the City Solicitor advised that no action could be taken until the provision was formally included in the next year's budget. Councillor Horgan objected strongly, stating that such expenditure was unjustified in the current financial climate. He suggested deferring the project for at least twelve months. Alderman Daly questioned the propriety of the current, soon-to-be-dissolved Council committing such funds and thereby burdening their successors. Despite these concerns, the Chairman and other members of the sub-committee insisted that the work was necessary and beneficial. Councillor O'Sullivan added that he believed the public would support the decision and it would be unwise to reject the College's offer. Councillor Horgan maintained his opposition, citing financial hardship and excessive rates already imposed on ratepayers. The recommendation was ultimately adopted, with only Councillor Horgan dissenting. Lastly, five tenders were received for the supply of steam and smith's coal. The lowest tender for smith's coal, at 45 shillings per ton, was submitted by Messrs. Kearney & Co. of Lavitt's Quay and was accepted. For steam coal, the lowest tender—13 shillings and 9 pence per ton—was submitted by Messrs.

Kelleher & Harrington, also of Lavitt's Quay, and was likewise accepted.[35]

In June 1923, an editorial in the '*Cork Examiner*' mentioned that the Public Works Committee of the Cork Corporation had been considering the City Treasurer's estimate for the half-year ending 30th September 1923. As part of its efforts to economise, the Committee had proposed a reduction of £500 from the public lighting estimate, to be achieved by extinguishing the lamps earlier each evening. The editorial claimed that this proposal was not only ill-conceived, but also deeply unfair to a significant section of the rate-paying public who were obliged to be out after dark. It was almost astonishing that, in the editorial's view, that, in its zeal for economy, the Committee had not proposed to abolish public lighting altogether. The opinion piece went on to say that medical doctors, nurses, clergymen, cattle dealers, bakers, railway workers, and countless other night workers—who all contributed to the city's revenue—deserved far more equitable treatment. The Public Works Committee would do well, it believed, to reflect on the real-life impact of such decisions. One hoped, it claimed, that at the next municipal elections, a more competent and responsive committee would be elected in its place. In the meantime, it suggested that it must be emphasised that reducing public lighting was a dangerous and regressive move. Far from being a step forward in responsible budgeting, it posed, in its view, unnecessary risks to citizens who must venture out at night. Many parts of the city and suburbs were already poorly and inadequately lit. They strongly supported what it regarded as prudent financial management, but savings could surely be found in other areas—ones that did not jeopardise public safety or inconvenience law-abiding residents. It suggested that this, in its view, ill-timed effort to save £500—by subjecting hundreds of people to increased risks—was an affront to common sense. It reflected poorly, in its view, on the judgement of the Public Works Committee, which seemed determined to act with its tongue firmly in its cheek. What, the average citizen might reasonably ask, is he getting

[35] *Cork Examiner 5/4/1923*

in return for the rates he pays? The article claimed that he received chlorinated water of somewhat questionable quality, streets that were dirty and dusty—a supposed disgrace to civic standards—and now he was to be further penalised by cuts to public lighting. One must wonder, it opined, how long the citizens would tolerate such subpar service. Had normal political conditions prevailed earlier that year, the-then current city Corporation—including that Committee—would have ceased to exist as early as January. That they remain in office despite demonstrating retrograde rather than progressive ideas, especially on public spending, was a matter of regret in the view of the paper. It was deeply unfortunate that fresh, forward-thinking voices had not yet been introduced into the city Corporation. This proposal to economise by reducing public lighting had nothing to recommend it. It would be unpopular with every class of citizen. It was, in its view, a blatant injustice to a large and essential segment of the population. At a time when theft was already far too common, this move may have placed householders at even greater risk. Ironically, it was suggested, the amount saved would scarcely cover the Lord Mayor's salary. It concluded by saying that if citizens were not to be provided with the full and adequate public lighting they were entitled to, they may find themselves compelled to take action as ratepayers—both in their own interests and in the interests of the wider community.[36]

In September 1923, at a Committee meeting, Mr O'Riordan protested against the suggested renaming of the North Gate Bridge to "Griffith Bridge." He stated that he had no objection to the greatest possible honour being paid to the memory of the late Mr Griffith, but, as an antiquarian, he objected to the name change. He suggested that, instead, the Berwick Fountain could be named after Mr Arthur Griffith. Mr Barry agreed and emphasised that the North and South Gate Bridges were historic landmarks in Cork, and that their names should not be altered. Mr O'Riordan indicated that

[36] *Cork Examiner 8/6/1923*

he would submit a notice of motion to rescind the proposed change.[37]

At an October 1923 meeting of the Public Works Committee, it was reported that 231 panes of glass in the gas lamps had been broken during the two weeks ending on the 2nd inst. Members expressed satisfaction that the Civic Guard were taking action to protect the lamps and noted that a prosecution had taken place during the week for alleged vandalism. A letter was received from the Cork Gas Consumers' Company indicating that they proposed to reduce the cost of gas supplied for public lighting by 1 shilling and 8 pence per lamp per annum. However, owing to the excessive breakages, the standard price of maintenance would be increased by 5 shillings and 1 penny per lamp per annum. Mr. Morgan observed that the number of lamps amounted to approximately 1,200, so the additional cost would total around £300 per year—an item he described as very serious. He suggested that the entire matter of gas lighting costs be referred to the City Engineer for a full report. Once they had that information, they could consider the best course of action. While acknowledging the seriousness of the breakages, he cautioned against placing such a burden on the ratepayers without first exploring alternatives. He further suggested that representations be made to the directors of the Gas Company to request a reconsideration of the proposed maintenance charge. Additionally, schools should be asked to impress upon pupils the importance of respecting public property. Mr. Allen remarked that within a six-month period, 6,716 panes had been broken—a state of affairs he described as a disgrace to Cork. Mr. Horgan's suggestions were agreed to.

A letter (previously published) from Messrs. Henry Ford & Son, Ltd., regarding Centre Park Road was discussed. The committee decided to visit the site with the City Engineer after the meeting. The Engineer estimated that 280 trees would be required, at a total planting cost of £424. If the Corporation were to waive the requirement for a mastic

[37] *Cork Examiner 20/9/1923*

topping on the road, this would raise the issue of compensation. The Chairman confirmed that they would visit the road, and that the matter of the trees could be left in the hands of the Engineer and Mr. Grace to arrange. A letter from the Minister of Local Government (also previously published), announcing an advance of £2,120 from the Road Fund, was referred to the Engineer for a report. It was also decided that copies of the letter would be circulated among the committee members.[38]

In December 1923, a meeting of the Committee saw Mr Travers, on behalf of the Cork Gas Consumers' Company, in attendance to respond to complaints made concerning the public lighting of the city. Mr J. V. O'Sullivan reiterated the complaints he had previously made, stating there were persistent reports from various parts of the city about poor public lighting. He remarked that if one entered private houses throughout the city, people consistently complained about inadequate lighting and alleged that officials from the Cork Gas Company were not addressing those complaints. The general concern was that the gas being supplied lacked both heating and illuminating power. Mr O'Sullivan asserted that the Corporation, being the Gas Company's best customer, was entitled to receive better service, as were the citizens. Mr Barry commented that in his district, they might as well be using candlelight for all the good the gas lamps did. He felt something should be done to meet the needs of householders. Although the lighting had been very poor over the past month, he noted an improvement in the last few days and expressed hope that the Gas Company would make further efforts to assist the public. Mr Mahony stated that he, too, had previously made complaints about the lighting, particularly in his own home. Mr Hennessy added that anyone walking through the streets could observe that the lamps were in poor condition, and that making complaints seemed to have no effect.

Mr Travers responded that some of the remarks made at the previous meeting about the company were rather strong. As

[38] *Cork Examiner 4/10/1923*

to the allegation that the company did not attend to complaints, he strongly denied it. Mr O'Sullivan clarified that he had never made such a statement. What he had said was that when complaints were made, there was no noticeable improvement in the gas supply. Mr Travers accepted this correction. Addressing private lighting, Mr Travers explained that the company had staff regularly visiting households throughout the city. These staff were instructed not only to check on consumers' premises but also to ask whether there were any complaints. All complaints were attended to immediately—either before the end of the day or, in any case, within 24 hours. The company had received numerous letters of appreciation from consumers whose lighting had been addressed, and company records showed that there were fewer complaints now than in previous years. When people experienced poor lighting, it was often because their mantles were defective. There had also been a charge against the Gas Company alleging that it charged higher rates than elsewhere. Mr Travers pointed out that the cost of slot meters had been significantly reduced and that gas in Cork was being sold more cheaply than in any other town in the Free State, and even at a lower rate than in Dublin. He also emphasised that the company always endeavoured to do its best and was keen to satisfy all of its customers, both the general public and the Corporation. He further stated that it was the Corporation's responsibility to ensure that public lamps were maintained and kept clean. Mr Travers then read from a report prepared by the company's inspector, which outlined districts where public lamps were found to be dirty and neglected. In the Blarney Street district alone, 20 lamps were in such a state. He also reported cases where not only were lamps dirty, but mantles were broken and chimneys damaged. In November, 275 cases were recorded by the company's inspector of lamps being out despite gas supply being in order, indicating there were no mantles installed. Mr Travers insisted the company was committed to ensuring that the city was properly lit and refuted suggestions that they were negligent. He noted there were no hidden meter charges, and the company wished to assist in developing lighting throughout the city. The Corporation, he reminded

the meeting, was responsible for keeping the lamps clean and maintained.

The foreman lamplighter was then called to the meeting. He explained that several of his men were out sick and that the defects mentioned by Mr Travers had not been reported to him. He disagreed with Mr Travers's statements regarding the Blarney Street area. Mr Horgan suggested that members of the Committee should visit the affected districts. He expressed belief in Mr Travers's report and felt it would be beneficial. He proposed that a special meeting of the Committee be convened to deal with the issue, and in the meantime, the foreman lamplighter should address the complaints. Mr O'Sullivan said he was pleased to have raised the matter, as he was confident it would lead to improvements. While he did not question the good intentions of the Gas Company, he maintained that the citizens were not satisfied with the current public and private lighting. What was needed, he insisted, was adequate lighting and heating power in the gas supply.

The Chairman suggested that a general report be obtained from Mr Travers. In reply to a question about the heating power of the gas, Mr Travers stated that the company's standard was 500 thermal units per cubic foot. He also proposed methods for achieving more uniform lighting throughout the city. Mr Gerald Byrne commented that regardless of the Committee's decisions, they were seldom implemented. The cleaning of lamps, he said, was not being carried out, and the longer they served on the Corporation, the more they realised their directives were being ignored. Mr Keane drew attention to the lighting on Assumption Road, and Mr Travers undertook to investigate the matter. It was then decided to call a special meeting to investigate the entire question of public lighting. The City Engineer reported that on a recent Saturday, gas lamps in several city districts had been extinguished by unknown persons before the scheduled time, and the incident had been reported to the Civic Guard. Furthermore, 150 mantles had been broken, marking an increase of 71 from the previous report. Mr Barry praised the excellent manner in which trees had

been planted in the park and stated that with the seating accommodation now provided, the park was becoming a place of real value to the public. The Secretary of the Committee noted that funds had been set aside for park improvements. Mr Barry remarked that more seats should be provided as soon as possible after Christmas. The gardener reported that stray horses were posing a danger to the trees and recommended that guards be placed around them for protection. The Secretary was instructed to contact Messrs Henry Ford to have these guards installed.

The Chairman also addressed charges previously made against him at a city Corporation meeting, regarding his decision to employ men in the park without authorisation. He stated there was no truth to the accusation and requested that the minute of the relevant committee meeting be read. The minute confirmed that the decision to employ the necessary labour for planting trees in the centre of the park had been left to the discretion of the Chairman (Councillor Daly), the City Engineer, and the City Gardener. The Chairman asserted that this proved he had acted within the authority granted by the Committee and that the men he had engaged had been nominated by various members of the Public Works Committee. His actions were approved, and his explanation was accepted by those present.[39]

In January 1924, a special meeting of the Public Works Committee was held to consider the letter from the Ministry of Local Government dated 27th November 1923, announcing that the Government intended to finance, to the extent of £1.25 million, a scheme of road improvement. Councillor O'Sullivan began by stating his recollection that the meeting had been called not to discuss the letter from the Ministry, but rather to consider the condition of the city's streets and the City Engineer's report. The Chairman responded that he had understood the meeting was convened to consider that letter. Councillor Horgan supported O'Sullivan's version, stating that the meeting was indeed intended to address street conditions and public lighting.

[39] *Cork Examiner 20/12/1923*

O'Sullivan asked why the meeting had not been convened as originally ordered by the Committee.

He went on to criticise the City Engineer, Mr Delany, for releasing his reports on street conditions to the press, without giving the Committee members an opportunity to defend themselves. He described this as improper and unjust, noting that the Engineer was fully aware that the Committee was hindered by a lack of funding. O'Sullivan objected to the '*Examiner's*' accompanying editorial, which praised the City Engineer as forward-thinking, implying by contrast that the Committee was out of date. Councillor Horgan countered that part of the City Engineer's report had been read at a previous meeting and it was understood that it would be published. O'Sullivan pointed out that not just a portion but the entire report had been published, including sections that had not been presented at the meeting. He emphasised that between 1911 and 1914 the Corporation had spent £26,000 on street improvements and had a plan to continue, which was derailed by the war and lack of funding. Delany had attended meetings where these issues were discussed and was aware that any further reports needed to be grounded in financial reality. O'Sullivan stressed the need for plans the city could afford to carry out, rather than ideal schemes that were economically unfeasible.

He also mentioned that, over the course of the preceding Christmas, while Mr Delany was in Dublin, it fell to the Town Clerk to find seasonal employment for additional workers. Committee members, he said, were unpaid and constantly confronted in public with questions like, "Isn't it a scandal?" It was not their role to supervise staff directly — that responsibility fell to the Corporation's paid officials. It was also the responsibility of these officials to present actionable plans. For the City Engineer to publish a report critical of the Committee without giving them a chance to respond was, in O'Sullivan's view, both unfair and unjust. At this point, Councillor Horgan disagreed, stating, "I wouldn't go that far." Councillor Egan suggested referring to the minutes of the previous meeting. Horgan acknowledged that everyone accepted the streets were in a poor state, and the

Chairman agreed. Horgan continued by questioning why, with the same number of staff employed, the streets remained in such bad condition. He said that even accounting for poor weather, there had been no improvement despite repeated complaints. He hoped that practical steps would be taken soon. He added that in some areas the footpaths were nearly as bad as the road surfaces. Horgan also blamed heavy commercial lorries travelling at high speeds through city streets for contributing significantly to the deterioration. He suggested the idea of implementing speed regulations that would enhance public safety and prolong the life of road surfaces. He then addressed the publication of the City Engineer's reports. According to Horgan, Mr Delany had read extracts of the report at the previous meeting and had been given authority to publish them. While Delany had initially doubted the press would be interested, Horgan recalled telling him that the Press would publish anything of public interest. That, he said, was how the reports came to be printed. He then addressed Councillor O'Sullivan's criticisms directly, stating that some of his remarks were inaccurate. When O'Sullivan challenged him to identify what was inaccurate, Horgan responded that the claim Delany had published the reports without Committee approval was false — Delany had the Committee's authorisation. O'Sullivan disagreed, insisting no such permission had been granted. Horgan stood firm, saying, "I say he had." He added that it was not fair to lay all the blame on the City Engineer. The Chairman interjected, suggesting they consult the meeting minutes to resolve the matter. Assistant Secretary Mr O'Sullivan said that the minutes had not yet been written up. Councillor O'Sullivan reiterated that at the last meeting, only extracts had been read, but the entire report had subsequently been published. The Chairman concluded by stating that the report was too long and too significant to be dealt with adequately at the previous meeting, and that Mr Delany had handed it to the press representative in the presence of all members — as far as he could recall. Councillor O'Sullivan maintained his position,

reiterating that he had proposed a special meeting to discuss the Engineer's reports — not the letter from the Ministry.[40]

In April 1924, at a meeting of the Committee, consideration of a letter from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, enclosing a copy of regulations relating to the standard of gas to be supplied to consumers under the Gas Regulations Act 1919 and the Cork Gas (Charges) Order, 1922, was deferred pending a report on the matter. Permission was granted to Messrs. Musgrave Bros. to lower a narrow footpath outside the entrance to their premises at Paul's Avenue, in order to facilitate the entry of vehicles. The reference from Council to consider and report whether light work could be procured for any employees on the sick list, in view of recent surcharges on payments made to the same, was referred to the City Engineer. The following reductions were made in the estimates submitted for the half-year ending 30th September, 1924:

- Macadamising: reduced from £4,891 5s to £4,000
- Public lighting: reduced from £5,464 to £5,164
- Stationery, printing and advertising: reduced from £100 to £50

The item "repairing workmen's shelters" (estimated at £50) was deemed unnecessary, and was therefore struck out. The estimated overall decrease for the financial year 1924–1925, as compared with 1923–1924, was £1,875.[41] A deputation from the Independent Ex-Servicemen's Association appeared before the meeting for the purpose of obtaining permission to erect, on a site to be selected, a monument to the memory of the men of Cork city who fell in the Great War. Mr. M. J. O'Riordan, T.C., who led the deputation, stated that he had no need to speak at length to commend such a project. At the beginning of the Great War, Ireland was called upon to play her part, and she responded in a noble and honourable way. Her old ally, France—where Irishmen had often found refuge

[40] *Cork Examiner 11/1/1924*

[41] *Cork Examiner 17/4/1924*

—was in danger. The Irish had taken their part in the fight for the freedom of small nationalities. Some of the young men who died in the war were his own comrades and playmates. If this monument were erected in Cork, it would show the world that Ireland had fulfilled her duty when called upon and had not shirked it. He believed the members of the Committee were sympathetic to the idea and suggested the corner of Winthrop Street as the most central and suitable location in the city. The Chairman responded that he did not think it necessary to hear from the other members of the deputation or to labour the point further. He believed the Committee was in full agreement with the proposal. Mr. S. Mahony then proposed, and Mr. M. Egan seconded, that the plans and other details be submitted to the engineering officials for a report.

The Lord Mayor, who entered at this stage, noted that the matter was a very delicate one. He stated that he was among those who believed that the men who died in the Great European War would, had they been given the chance, have fought for Ireland in 1921. While he did not wish to detract from any tribute to the fallen, he also wanted to see his way clearly. The European War, he said, was not truly Ireland's war. Many Irishmen gave their lives in what they believed to be a defence of small nations, yet the first test of that ideal—justice in Ireland—was not upheld. He reminded the Committee that England's 'justice' had included the burning of half of Cork city and its Municipal Buildings. For this reason, he said, he would be very slow to support the erection of a monument that, in any way, might seem to honour that nation. He was prepared to admit that the majority of the men who fought in Flanders would have also fought against 'England' in Ireland. In conclusion, the Lord Mayor said he did not wish his name to be associated with anything that might perpetuate the memory of England's tyranny in Cork. Mr. O'Riordan responded that he was not there to uphold England's banner. He was speaking for the men who gave their lives in the fight for humanity against tyranny and infidelity. He reminded the Committee that he had been honoured by the Republican Corporation—despite not being part of their party—with a role in the guard of honour for

the body of Terence MacSwiney, the Brixton martyr. He noted that when bringing the body across to Cork city, the men who were most prominent and fearless in wearing the badge of the breakaway movement in England were the Munster Fusiliers. Mr. O'Riordan identified as a nationalist and repeated that he was not present to honour England, but rather to represent the men who, he said, had fought and died for freedom. The proposition by Mr. Mahony was then passed.[42]

At a September 1924 meeting of the Public Works Committee, the Head Lamplighter reported that seventy-seven panes of glass in the public lamps had been broken since the last meeting. This represented a reduction of twenty-eight compared with the previous report. The Lord Mayor enquired whether any explanation had been received from the Electric Light Company regarding the non-lighting of the lamps in MacCurtain Street last Saturday night, between 9.30 and 10.45 p.m. The Head Lamplighter responded that the company had informed him their clock, by which the lighting was regulated, was out of order. The Lord Mayor quipped, "That must have been a political clock"—prompting laughter. It was decided that the company be written to for a formal explanation. Mr. Byrne asked whether there was any report from the City Engineer's department regarding the plans submitted for the proposed war memorial by the Independent Ex-Servicemen. Mr. Hare replied that due to pressure of the work, he was unable to prepare a report in time. However, he promised to have it ready for the Committee's next meeting. A deputation then appeared from the Cork Operative Slaters and Plasterers' Society to raise a concern that Michael Crowley, at that time employed by the Corporation, was not a member of their society. They further asserted that theirs was the only recognised Plasterers' Society in the city, and unless the matter was resolved, they would withdraw their members from Corporation work. They expressed their willingness to have Crowley join their society and enter into an agreement.

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[42] *Cork Examiner 7/8/1924*

After discussion, it was decided to suspend Crowley until the following Friday night. In the meantime, he was to visit the Plasterers' Society and come to an agreement with them. The matter would then be discussed again at a special meeting of the Committee on Friday night. The next item on the agenda was to consider correspondence, including a further report from Mr. P. J. M. Larmansaw, London, on the result of analysis of a sample of mixphalte taken from the Lower Glanmire Road. The Chairman referred to a letter received at the previous meeting from Mr. Quigley, Government Roads Inspector, concerning the condition of the Lower Glanmire Road, which was under construction by Messrs. T. J. Moran & Co. The letter had been treated as confidential, and the Chairman had asked the Press not to report on it. However, the following day, a portion of the letter—specifically that which criticised the road—was published in the Press.

The Chairman remarked that since the Press appeared determined to publish the contents of the letter, the entire letter should have been published for fairness, particularly to Mr. Moran. He noted that he personally did not believe in secrecy and that the public had a right to know what was happening within the Corporation. If the full letter had been printed, it would not have reflected unfavourably on Mr. Moran. He believed that, in the interest of justice, the entire matter should be made public. The Lord Mayor added that if the letter had been marked "private," the responsibility for its publication lay with the '*Examiner*.' He stated that the paper had knowingly published private correspondence and had to bear the consequences. During the inquiry, he said, the Examiner had played a significant and troubling role. The Lord Mayor accepted full responsibility for his comments and criticised the Examiner for not providing the kind of support public bodies might reasonably expect from the local Press. He pointed out that although the paper may have shared views with some members of the Corporation, it had not acted accordingly. For example, at the previous Friday's Council meeting, a highly important letter had been received from the office of the Local Government Board regarding the appointment of a new City Engineer, but not a

word of it had appeared in the Press. The Lord Mayor demanded that the letter be produced and published, noting that while one member's name appeared in it, it could be omitted if necessary.[43]

In early October, Mr C. L. Hare, of the City Engineer's Department, submitted a report in response to an application from the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club, Marlboro' Street, which proposed the erection of a monument in memory of Cork-based soldiers who died in the Great War. Three sites had been suggested for the monument: the corner near the Coliseum, the lower end of the Grand Parade facing Queen's Old Castle (between tram tracks), and Patrick Street facing Winthrop Street. Hare provided detailed specifications of the proposed monument. The foundation was to be 11 feet square and 1 foot 6 inches deep, made of concrete. The base would measure 5 feet square and 1 foot 3 inches high, with a sub-base of 4 feet square and 7.5 inches high. The die base would measure 3 feet square and 3 feet 6 inches in height, topped by a moulded cap of 3 feet 9 inches square and 1 foot high, which would bear a motto. The base of the obelisk would be 2 feet 7.5 inches square and 7.5 inches high, with the obelisk itself measuring 1 foot square and tapering to a point. The total height of the structure would be 17 feet. Constructed from selected Irish limestone, the monument would include three stepping courses, starting at 11 feet square and narrowing to 7 feet square at the top step. The total approximate weight was estimated at 11 tons. Hare visited all three proposed sites and concluded that any suggestion of placing the monument between tram tracks must be dismissed. The width between tram rails on all routes was only 6 feet 6 inches, whereas the base of the monument and its steps required a footprint significantly larger than this. The stepping courses alone would occupy nearly the entire width of the tracks. At the Coliseum corner, there would be insufficient clearance for the monument, and similar limitations applied to the Grand Parade site. As for Patrick Street, although it offered a visually prominent location, it served as a critical hub for

[43] *Cork Examiner 19/9/1924*

traffic from multiple directions. Even positioning the monument outside the tram tracks would result in major obstruction, rendering it unfeasible under current traffic conditions. Following Hare's assessment, the Chairman acknowledged that none of the proposed sites were viable. However, it was noted that additional sites were likely to be suggested. A representative of the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club addressed the meeting and proposed two alternative locations: Parnell Place near Parnell Bridge and the western end of the South Mall. The Committee agreed to refer these new options for further consideration.

Attention then shifted to lighting and public infrastructure. Mr Egan suggested extending the gas main to Assumption Road to improve street lighting. The Committee agreed to contact the Gas Company regarding this proposal. The Foreman of Lighting reported that since the previous meeting, a total of 239 panes of glass had been broken in public lamps: 51 in the North-East Ward, 143 in the North-West, 28 in the South, 11 in the West, and 6 in the Centre. This marked an increase of 167 broken panes compared to the last report. The Foreman also noted that five large and four small electric lamps had been unlit for an entire night since the last meeting. On 21st September, ten large lamps on the South Mall and eight on the Grand Parade were delayed by half an hour in lighting. The Committee resolved to contact the Electric Lighting Company on the matter. In relation to lighting at Lord Mayor MacCurtain's Buildings, the Foreman reported a conversation with a representative of the Gas Company, who confirmed that the installation of lamps there would incur no charge. Mr Hennessy raised concerns about the unclean condition of Brown Street due to refuse accumulation. He suggested that efforts should be made to keep the street clean. The Chairman responded that he had spoken to the ganger, who explained that once Corporation workers had cleaned the area, residents and local business owners often discarded refuse back onto the street. According to the ganger, daily monitoring would be necessary to maintain cleanliness. Mr Hennessy also observed that water had been leaking from a pipe in Brown Street for several days, with no apparent attempt made to address the

issue. The Lord Mayor remarked that it appeared no Corporation staff had been in Brown Street recently. The Committee agreed to refer both issues to the Highways Superintendent for immediate attention.

The meeting proceeded to review tenders submitted for cartage work in the Highways Department. The tenders of Denis O'Neill (17 Model Cottages), John Fitzgerald (3 Rock Cottages), Annie O'Connor (1 Ferry Lane), and Margaret O'Connor (374 Blarney Street) were under investigation to verify their legitimacy. The Secretary reported that Annie O'Connor and John Fitzgerald had withdrawn their tenders. Daniel Healy of 191 Blarney Street wrote to state that he had never submitted a tender and requested that this be publicly clarified. Denis O'Neill expressed surprise that his tender was under scrutiny, insisting that it was genuine and that he was prepared to fulfil the contract. The Chairman noted that the Council required 27 contractors but, with four now withdrawn or disqualified, and only 26 remained. The Committee was tasked with recommending one more. It was agreed that preference should be given to the oldest contractor, provided their rate was 10 shillings and 10 pence per day, in line with the other accepted tenders. Mr Gamble raised concerns that a significant portion of the tenders were allegedly fraudulent and that some coordination had taken place among applicants to fix terms. He called for further investigation by Corporation officers. However, the Chairman maintained that the Committee could only act on tenders that had been officially returned. The Committee decided to recommend the tender of Thomas Hegan of The Lough—identified as the oldest contractor at the approved rate of 10s 10d per day—to complete the list of contractors.

Acting on the Lord Mayor's personal recommendation, the Committee had agreed that future tenderers would be required to deposit £10 with their application. This sum would be forfeited if the tender proved to be fraudulent. Finally, a report was read regarding the asphalting of Watercourse Road. The work was progressing, but a decision had yet to be made about the section opposite Mr Manner's gate. It was proposed that an area measuring approximately

18 feet by 7.5 feet opposite McCormick's hoist be sett-paved instead. The matter was referred to Mr J. J. O'Sullivan, the engineer in charge of the works, for resolution.[44]

A major event would occur that would change how public works was administered by the city council. Following precedent made in relation to Dublin Corporation, a public inquiry was held on the matter of dissolving Cork Corporation. An anodyne report was authored by Nicholas O'Dwyer, which did not include a definitive recommendation from the inquiry. Nevertheless, the inquiry confirmed a belief expressed by Alderman Richard Beamish TD in advance of the inquiry, and Cork Corporation was dissolved. Mr. Philip Monahan assumed the role of commissioner at midday on Friday, 31 October 1924. Monahan walked into the council chamber in Washington St. Courthouse at the designated time, breaking a council meeting of Cork Corporation. He formally requested that the city councillors present remove their possessions and depart. The Cork Corporation was wound up at the same moment.[45]

As reported in the '*Cork Examiner*,' by December 1924, the City Commissioner sat in place of the city Corporation, and conducted the work of both the Public Works and Waterworks Committees on the same day.[46]

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[44] Cork Examiner 2/10/1924

[45] Boyle & Quinlivan (2024). 'How the Dissolution 100 years ago of Cork Corporation Led to our Local Government System Today.' Irish Examiner

[46] Cork Examiner 4/12/1924

BUILDING A NEW CITY

The rebuilding of a burnt-out chunk of Cork city was a major part of a public works drive.

PAVING THE WAY, 1925-1929

In January 1925, during the review of the accounts for the Public Works Department, the Commissioner raised a query regarding the employment of a man named Mullane in the lamp lighting department. The foreman lamplighter explained that Mullane had been assigned as a supervisor of electric and gas lamps, with a wage of £2 2s. 6d. per week. He was responsible for covering the duties of any lamp lighter who became ill and, when not engaged in that role, he supervised both electric and gas lighting operations. The Commissioner ordered that Mullane's services be dispensed with. In relation to two men employed to renew broken lamp mantles, the Commissioner expressed the opinion that this work should be done by the lamp lighters themselves. The foreman responded that the lamp lighters were already tasked with cleaning the lamps and worked from early morning until late at night. No further action was taken on this point. Several accounts presented for payment dated back to 1922. The Commissioner remarked that he could not verify such delayed accounts and emphasised that if suppliers failed to submit their claims monthly, the Corporation should cease dealing with them. While reviewing the accounts, the Commissioner also directed that all Corporation contractors must prepare and submit their own invoices, criticising the practice of Corporation officials preparing bills on behalf of contractors, which he said would no longer be allowed.

The annual coal allowance for the caretakers of the Mardyke and the Marina was reduced from four tons to one ton each. It was noted that these caretakers received a weekly wage of £3 2s. 6d., were provided with uniforms, and lived in the lodges supplied to them. It was reported that 670 panes of glass in gas lamps had been broken across the city over a seven-week period. The Commissioner remarked that this appeared to be a chronic issue in Cork and questioned whether anything could be done to prevent such damage. The Town Clerk responded that preventing it would require the presence of a Civic Guard at nearly every lamp. The foreman lamplighter noted that the vandalism was concentrated in specific areas. It was ordered that individuals

caught damaging the lamps be prosecuted. The lowest tender for a time book (£2 7s. 6d.) and a day book (7s. 6d.) was submitted by the Shandon Printing Works, Robert Street, and was accepted. Similarly, the tender of Messrs. Hickey and Byrne was accepted at 23s. for supplying fire brigade pay sheets. The Commissioner reported that daily water consumption in the city remained at 42 gallons per person, which he considered excessively high. He pointed to significant wastage, particularly overnight, when water continued to flow despite the absence of factory operations. He highlighted that in the Northern District, water flow was recorded at 33,000 gallons per hour, and in the Middle District, it reached 37,000 gallons per hour. This indicated that those areas were not being adequately managed. The Commissioner warned that if no improvements were observed, further action would be taken against inspectors. The Water Superintendent attributed the difficulty in conducting night inspections to poor weather conditions. The Commissioner retorted that if water was flowing overnight, the leak must also persist during the day. He recalled a time when average consumption had been reduced to 33 or 34 gallons per day and questioned why that figure had risen again. The Water Superintendent assured him that inspectors were working on the issue. The Commissioner criticised the slow progress but no immediate action was taken. In connection with Fitzgerald Park, the Commissioner announced that the caretaker of the museum would no longer be paid from the date the building was converted to Municipal Offices. However, he said he would consider if any alternative employment could be offered to the individual.[47]

During March 1925, carrying out the business of the Cork Corporation at Fitzgerald's Park, City Commissioner, Mr. Philip Monahan, ordered that the weekly payment of 16 shillings for the caretaking of Shandon Street Park be discontinued. The City Engineer submitted a report stating that two trees located on the Mardyke, on either side of Mr Cook's gate entrance bridge, were causing damage to the river wall. He recommended that both trees be felled and

[47] *Cork Examiner 22/1/1925*

that the green timber be transported to the workshops for use there. The Commissioner responded that he would personally inspect the trees at the Mardyke before any action was taken. The Foreman Lamplighter reported that, since the last committee meeting, a total of 147 panes of glass had been broken in public gas lamps.[48] Later that month, in response to a recommendation from the Public Works Committee that the Commissioner should inspect two trees outside Mr Cook's gate on the Mardyke—trees which had been reported as causing damage to the Dyke stream—the Commissioner stated that he had visited the site and inspected the trees. He concluded that the trees were not to be removed, as they were not causing any harm.[49]

At a meeting chaired by Mr. Monahan held in April 1925, it was reported that since the last meeting, 250 panes of glass had been broken in public gas lamps. Failures of electric lamps in various parts of the city were also noted, covering the period from 19th March to 14th April. It was ordered that the usual fines be imposed in these cases. The City Gardener's report detailing the work completed since the last meeting was approved. The City Engineer, Mr. S. W. Farrington, reported that the cost of providing and installing a new floor in Stall 56 of the Grand Parade Market, to be paid for by the occupier, would amount to £6 7s. Permission to proceed with the work was granted. A further report from the City Engineer indicated that the cost of supplying and fitting a marble tabletop at the Bantry Stall, Grand Parade Market—subject to the applicant paying half the cost—would be £33 10s., inclusive of fittings. Consideration of this proposal was deferred. The City Engineer also reported that, due to the demolition of houses in Ballard's Lane, the laneway would soon be uninhabited. As a result, it was decided to remove the gas lamp there, which had reportedly been ineffective for some time due to frequent breakages.[50]

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[48] *Cork Examiner 19/3/1925*

[49] *Cork Examiner 28/3/1925*

[50] *Cork Examiner 17/4/1925*

In June 1925, a letter was read to Monahan from the Organising Committee of the Public Works, Roads and Transport Congress and Exhibition (1925), drawing attention to the upcoming third Congress and Exhibition, scheduled to be held at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, from the 19th to the 26th of November. The Committee requested that delegates be appointed to attend the event.[51]

In August 1925, with Mr. Monahan conducting the work of Public Works and other committees, among the matters addressed was a report from the City Engineer, Mr. W. Farrington, regarding necessary repairs at the Courthouse (City Court). The following items were identified: repairs to the dome of the City Court (£9 10s.), overhaul of swing doors (£4 10s.), overhaul of ventilators (£1 10s.), overhaul of sashes and cords (£1), and replacement of broken downpipes (£3 10s.), bringing the total estimated cost to £20. Mr. Farrington noted that he had already ordered the dome repairs to proceed without delay, as falling plaster was causing further damage and posing a safety risk. He stated that £400 had been allocated in the current year's estimates for all Courthouse-related expenditure, of which £200 was designated for ordinary repairs and maintenance. Only around £19 had been spent to date. The report was approved, and an order was issued for all the repairs to proceed.

Mr. Farrington also provided a report on the asphalting of street surfaces. He confirmed that the South of Ireland Trinidad Lake Asphalt Company, Ltd., the appointed contractors, had completed work on Castle Street, Tuckey Street, part of South Terrace, Union Quay, and George's Quay. However, he identified a section of Union Quay—approximately four and one-third yards wide, from near Parnell Bridge to the School of Music—where there was little to no macadam coating due to the area being constructed on filled-in ground. He advised that this section was unsuitable for asphalt surfacing and recommended instead that it be treated as a contingent work and surfaced with six inches of

[51] *Cork Examiner 27/6/1925*

reinforced concrete. To prevent delays and added expense, Mr. Farrington had already arranged for the asphalt contractors to undertake the concrete work at a rate of 4s. 3d. per superficial yard, with a six-month guarantee. This recommendation was also approved. In addition, the Commissioner ordered that tenders be invited for repairs to the quay wall on the North Mall, a portion of which had collapsed. Plans and specifications for the necessary work were submitted by the City Engineer.[52]

In January 1926, conducting the business of Public Works, presided over by Mr. Monahan (City Commissioner), the City Engineer, Mr. S. W. Farrington, submitted an estimate for the lifting and alteration of kerbing on Maylor Street and Pavillion Street, arising from the Commissioner's recent interview with representatives of Messrs. Cash & Co., Patrick Street. The estimated cost for the works was £32 17s for Maylor Street and £20 3s for Pavillion Street, bringing the total to £53. In view of the setting back of the building line of the premises in question, Mr. Farrington recommended that the work proceed. The Commissioner approved the recommendation. Consideration was deferred on a report concerning complaints that the public right of way at the foot of Exham's Avenue was being obstructed by the placement of a barrier. It was proposed to install a cart entrance gate and a turnstile at an estimated cost of £35. The public right of way would be reserved for foot traffic only, with the cart entrance intended for use by the Corporation and its tenants. A report from the City Engineer concerning a proposed railway siding on Anderson's Quay was received and noted. Mr. Farrington explained that the road in question is a designated trunk road (T.R. 94), making it eligible for resurfacing grants. He considered the Harbour Board's proposal reasonable, though he warned that the siding could result in obstruction unless regulated properly. He recommended that standing railway trucks should only be allowed when the adjacent harbour siding is vacant. He further advised that the specification for the proposed concrete resurfacing be submitted for approval and returned

[52] *Cork Examiner 20/8/1925*

the report of the Commissioner's interview with the Harbour Board deputation, along with their cost estimates for the work. The City Engineer also submitted a plan outlining Messrs. Cash & Co.'s revised proposal for hoarding to be erected during building operations at the corner of Patrick Street and Winthrop Street. He confirmed that the hoarding would not cause more obstruction than was reasonable given the scale of the construction. Permission for the hoarding was granted, and the report was also approved. Regarding waterworks, the Resident Engineer, Mr. Riordan, reported that for the week ending 9th January, the average water flow recorded by the meters was 97,000 gallons per hour, compared to 122,000 gallons per hour during the same period the previous year. Water consumption was 38.0 gallons per head per day, down from 41.9 gallons per head per day the previous year. Notably, no unfiltered water was pumped, with the full supply being drawn from the filter tunnel.[53]

Mr. P. Monahan, City Commissioner, conducted a meeting of the Corporation Standing Committee in his office at Fitzgerald Park in June 1926. During the session, six applications for Corporation Entrance Scholarships to University College Cork were approved. Approval was granted for the City Engineer's proposal to erect the remaining "Safety First" signs outside schools, at a total cost of £39 19s. In reviewing tenders for street bins, the City Engineer recommended that samples be requested from each of two contractors—Messrs. Ham, Baker & Co., who quoted 65 shillings each, and Messrs. Fred Bird & Co., who quoted 68 shillings. The latter included a lock with the bin, which might be beneficial in areas frequented by children. Five tenders were submitted for tar macadam work on College Road and other areas, covering approximately 8,000 square yards. The Engineer recommended accepting the lowest bid, that of the South of Ireland Asphalt Co., Ltd., who quoted 26s 3d per ton for supply, 20s 3d for supply and rolling, and ½d per square yard for spraying. The quote was only a penny more per square yard than the rate used in the

[53] *Cork Examiner 16/1/1926*

Engineer's estimates, and, as it included preliminary work, it was deemed reasonable. The Engineer advised that having the rolling done by contract would be more efficient than managing it through direct labour.

Regarding a £5,750 unemployment relief grant, the City Engineer interpreted a letter from the Roads Department (dated 15th June 1925) as an invitation to apply for a further £1,507 to complete the original scheme. Of that amount, he proposed that £673 10s 10d be allocated to covering an excess of expenditure already incurred, and that the remaining £833 4s 2d be spent on further works on Albert Road and Albert Street. The proposed works included surfacing 440 square yards on Albert Road to the Borough boundary, extending concrete work southwards from the Power House corner, and creating concrete footpaths (82 square yards) along the northeast boundary of the Power House. The Commissioner approved the proposed scheme. The City Engineer also provided a progress report on the Waterworks Filtration Scheme. Excavation and associated works had been underway since the 21st of the previous month. Eight-foot concrete pipes were being positioned and prepared for pointing, and the entrance roadway from Lee Road was under construction. The concrete roof over the pure water basin was now complete, and the main shop and valve houses were well underway.

At the Capwell area's social housing site, the roadway was nearly complete, and a concrete boundary wall to Mr. Bateman's property had been constructed. Roadworks were progressing elsewhere: part of Gillabbey Street had been surfaced with water-bound macadam due to its poor condition under increased traffic, and Wellington Road was being tar-sprayed. The steam road roller was currently undergoing repairs and was expected to resume work on Coburg Street soon. Work was also planned for the layout of Coppinger's Acre, as the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust had lodged the first instalment of the cost. Preparations were being made to begin the project, with labour to be sourced from the Employment Exchange as per standard practice. The Commissioner adopted the report. Dr.

O'Donovan, Medical Officer of Health, reported that for the four weeks ending 22nd May, there were 50 dispensary cases of infectious diseases and 4 reported by private practitioners. Some of these cases were admitted to the Cork Fever Hospital.[54]

Also in June of 1926, the Assistant City Engineer submitted a report to the Commissioner's review of Public Works, indicating that the contractors were progressing with excavation works related to the water filtration scheme. The covering of the pure water basin was underway, and the concreting of the roadway at the Canwell housing site was nearly completed. Additionally, roadworks on Blarney Street and Mulgrave Road had been finished using water-bound macadam. A report from the foreman of lighting noted that approximately 111 lamps had been broken. It was also reported that several electric lamps were found unlit at specific times and locations, as detailed in the report.[55]

Mr. P. Monahan, City Commissioner, presided over the Corporation's business from his office at the Museum in Fitzgerald Park in September of 1926. Among the correspondence read was a circular letter from the Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, indicating that provision for the full payment of court criers had been made by the Department of Justice from voted funds. As such, these officers were no longer to be paid from local funds, effective from the 1st of the month. The Department also advised that the share of the County Borough Council in the Estate Duty Grant for the year ending 31st March 1926 amounted to £421 12s. 3d. However, this amount was entirely offset by deductions for arrears of loan instalments and penalty interest owed by the Cork City Mental Hospital Joint-Committee to the Commissioners of Public Works, leaving a net balance of zero. Additionally, the Secretary of the Department of Local Government and Public Health enclosed a copy of the

[54] *Cork Examiner 24/6/1926*

[55] *Cork Examiner 26/6/1926*

Auditor's report on his audit of the Cork Port Sanitary Authority's accounts for the year ended 31st March 1926, along with attested abstracts of the accounts.[56]

Mr. Philip Monahan, City Commissioner, attended at the offices in Fitzgerald Park on another September afternoon for the transaction of business for the various departmental committees of Cork Corporation. In the report submitted to the Public Works Committee by the City Engineer, the following matters were addressed, among those being a proposed aerial traveller for Messrs. McDonnell and Company on Anderson's Quay was presented, including plans and a report by Mr. O'Sullivan. Subject to recommendations made by the City Solicitor, the City Engineer recommended the proposal for approval. He noted that the aerial traveller would likely cause far less inconvenience and danger than the current practice of transporting heavy bags on men's shoulders across busy thoroughfares. The committee ordered that a permit be granted only if it was deemed absolutely necessary. Regarding a dangerous tree on Mardyke Walk, the City Gardener reported that a tree near the bandstand appeared to be rotten at the base. Upon inspection, the City Engineer confirmed the assessment and recommended its removal. The committee ordered that the tree be removed. An application was received from Messrs. H. and H. Hall, Ltd., to alter the gate entrance to their stores on Victoria Road. The proposed changes involved slightly widening the entrance and laying sett paving. The City Engineer recommended granting permission, provided the applicants bore the cost or that the work was completed to his satisfaction. The recommendation was approved.

In reference to a special grant of £10,875 received on 7 September 1927 for street improvements, the Minister for Local Government and Public Health approved the expenditure of the remaining balance of £3,107. The proposed works included Fisher's Lane (concrete), Thomas Street (concrete), and Anderson's Street (concrete) for a total

[56] *Cork Examiner 11/9/1926*

of £707; and Merchant's Quay and North Street (sett pavement) for £2,400—making a total of £3,107. The City Engineer recommended that R.S.C. No. 5 reinforcement be purchased for the concrete roads at 9d per square yard, with a 5% discount, and that "Resilia" expansion joints be included at 75-foot intervals. The recommendations were approved. An application was also received from Messrs. Beckett and Harrington, architects of South Mall, to erect a petrol pump on Watercourse Road on behalf of Mr. P. Dwyer. The City Engineer recommended that permission be granted, provided the pump be erected at the specified location marked "A" on the submitted plan. Waterworks reports were deferred for inspection. The surface of Winthrop Street, which had seen 20 years of wear, was reported to be in need of renewal. The estimated cost for relaying wood blocks on the existing concrete foundation was £600, excluding the potential reuse value of the old blocks. The City Engineer recommended that the work be carried out, and the committee agreed. An incident was reported involving damage to the Fire Station on Sullivan's Quay. On 9 January, a motor lorry belonging to Mr. Canny of Blackrock Road swerved while approaching a street sweeper and struck the hand barrow, causing minor damage, before continuing onto the footpath and striking the wall of the fire station. The damage to the wall was minimal. Mr. Canny was informed that the cost of repairs would be charged to him. According to Sweeper Neville, the steering gear appeared to have failed, and he believed there was no negligence on the part of the driver. The matter was referred to the Law Adviser.

In terms of the progress of road works, the City Engineer reported the following developments since his last update:

- On John Street, concreting of the surface was well underway, with 700 yards already completed.
- On Friar Street, a water-bound macadam surface was laid on part of the street.
- On Industry Street, repairs using water-bound macadam were in progress.

A report from the Resident Engineer at the Waterworks noted that the daily water consumption recorded by meters was 2,861,000 gallons for the lower level areas and 734,000 gallons for the higher levels. This brought the daily per capita consumption for the city and surrounding areas to 56.8 gallons, compared to 37.4 gallons for the same period last year.[57]

In December 1927, the Local Government Department wrote stating that, regarding the indebtedness of the Cork Joint Hospital Board to the Commissioners of Public Works, they understood the Cork County Council had by this time paid the demand of the Joint Board in full up to 31st March 1927, and had also made a payment on account for the current year ending 31st March 1928. Accordingly, they inquired why, if due provision was made each year in the Board's estimates for the repayment of loans, payment had been withheld. The Secretary explained that, as was known, these loans had been accumulating, and it had been decided to pay them in connection with the tuberculosis scheme. However, that scheme had not yet been completed. The interest was also accumulating, but it had previously been pointed out that the County Council had appointed their Medical Officer of Health, who was responsible for preparing the joint scheme. As agreed between the Joint Committee and the Corporation, this money was to be paid out of the grant once the scheme was completed. Mr. P. H. Barry stated that a strong letter should be sent to the Department, urging them to expedite the scheme. The Secretary said that he would communicate with them again.[58]

In February 1928, the '*Cork Examiner*' opined that, though much had been accomplished in a praiseworthy effort to cope with the pressing problem of housing in Cork City, there still appeared to be a growing need for more dwellings before the housing shortage was fully resolved. In an interview with the

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[57] *Evening Echo 16/9/1927*

[58] *Cork Examiner 9/12/1927*

courteous Town Clerk, Mr. Thomas Ireton, the paper's representative gathered the following interesting particulars.

From 1886—the year in which the erection of the first group of dwellings (Madden's Buildings) began—to 1901, a total of 1,179 houses had been built. The money for this purpose, £33,082, had been borrowed from the Commissioners of Public Works. These houses were all of the three-room type and were let at rents ranging from 2s 7d to 5s per week. An amount of £2,879 4s 10d of this loan remained outstanding. Three further groups of 185 houses had been built during 1905 and 1906 at a cost of £26,300, which had been raised through the issue of £3 10s 0d per cent Debenture Stock. The stock remained outstanding, but a sinking fund had accumulated £13,350 toward its redemption. These houses were let at weekly rents—29 at 3s 8d and 156 at 4s 10d. Notably, these 185 houses had been built without any Government or other aid. Between 1922 and 1924, 196 dwellings—known as MacCurtain's Buildings, MacSwiney's Villas, and French's Villas—had been erected. Of these, 93 contained five rooms and the remainder four. The Free State Government had contributed £70,083 toward the total cost of £109,620. The Corporation had raised £9,100 through a rate and borrowed £27,750, to be repaid in fifteen years with interest at 10 shillings under the then current bank rate. Three of the houses in French's Villas had been sold outright at £380 each, and a further twenty were being acquired by occupiers who had paid a £10 deposit and were paying 10s weekly. Full freehold ownership would be secured in 31 years from the date of conveyance. Another 123 houses were let as ordinary tenancies at weekly rents ranging from 10s 8d to 11s 10d. Every one of those 710 houses was occupied, and any house that became vacant was quickly sought after. For a recently completed group of 143 dwellings at Capwell, applications from prospective purchasers were numerous. The total cost of layout and building had been £81,512. Government grants had amounted to £11,960, and compensation received for the destruction of the City Hall had been temporarily diverted to fund the construction of these homes. The houses were divided into three categories:

- Four houses, each containing three rooms (a kitchen or living room and two bedrooms), with a purchase price of £500. Possession could be acquired by weekly payments of 8s for 31 years.
- 156 houses, each containing four rooms (a kitchen or living room and three bedrooms), with a purchase price of £400. Possession could also be acquired by weekly payments of 10s 6d over 31 years.
- Eight houses, each containing five rooms (a parlour, kitchen and living room, three bedrooms, and a bathroom), with a purchase price of £540. Possession could similarly be acquired by weekly payments of 14s for 31 years.

Payments made in multiples of £5 toward the purchase price served to shorten the duration of the annuity accordingly. These houses were sold on lease for a term of 200 years from 1st April 1928, at a ground rent of £1 per annum. The erection of 118 houses on a site at Evergreen and Curragh Road was underway, with site development already commenced by this time.[59]

During an April 1928 Dáil debate, Richard Sidney Anthony (a Labour TD) drew the House's attention to what he characterised as the failure—or at least the inaction, in his view,—of the Department of Industry and Commerce to intervene in a labour dispute that threatened to result in a lock-out of several Cork Corporation workers. The dispute had arisen from a proposal by the City Commissioner to reduce the workers' wages. Anthony did not address the substantive merits of the dispute at that moment. Instead, he sought clarification on the powers and responsibilities of the Department of Industry and Commerce in such situations. He noted that it had previously been customary for the Department, when made aware of either ongoing or impending disputes, to attempt to mediate and reconcile the parties involved—namely, employers and employees. Similarly, trade unions had traditionally informed the Department when disputes arose. Following this established practice, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

[59] *Cork Examiner 9/2/1928*

had contacted Mr. R. C. Ferguson, the Secretary of the Department, in a letter dated 16 April. In their letter, the union outlined that Commissioner Monahan had issued a demand for a significant wage reduction for their members working on Cork Corporation projects. A meeting had taken place the previous Thursday between Cork-based union officials and the Commissioner, but no resolution had been reached. The union highlighted that the affected workers had already accepted a wage cut of 4s 6d in 1925 and a further reduction of 2s in 1926. The new proposed cut of 6s was, therefore, deeply resented, and they warned that its imposition would inevitably lead to a work stoppage.

In response, the Department of Industry and Commerce stated that it had received the union's communication but explained that it was unable to act in the usual manner due to the involvement of another Government body—the Department of Local Government—which held certain responsibilities in the matter. As such, any appeal for intervention would first need to be addressed to that Department. However, the Department of Local Government had reportedly responded to prior inquiries by stating that it bore no responsibility in the matter and could not intervene. Given the serious risk of a disruption to public services in Cork City and the lack of any effort by the Government to mediate—as had been the customary approach in the past—Anthony questioned why the usual procedure had not been followed. He asked why the Minister for Industry and Commerce, or a representative of the Department, had failed to act on the union's request for intervention.

B. M. Egan, a Cumann na nGaedhael TD for Cork City, stated in response that he wished to offer a clarification, as his name had been publicly linked to the matter under discussion. He mentioned that he had spoken with Mr. Monahan a few days earlier and expressed his confidence in Monahan's fairness and ability to treat the workers justly. Egan also noted that those employed by the city Corporation enjoyed steady, year-round employment.

Minister Patrick McGilligan TD, of Cumann na Gaedhael, observed that Deputy Richard Anthony had somewhat moderated his earlier language. Initially, Anthony had referred to the Department of Industry and Commerce's "refusal" to intervene in a tense dispute involving Cork Corporation workers, but he later described it more mildly as a "failure" or "inaction." McGilligan pointed out that Anthony had, to some extent, answered his own concerns by reading aloud the letter from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. That letter, McGilligan explained, was simply an ordinary notification of a potential industrial dispute—it did not contain a direct invitation for the Department to intervene. He further noted that the Department received the union's letter on the 17th and issued a response the same day. Beyond that, McGilligan mentioned that there had been a consultation between the trade union official who wrote the letter and one of his departmental officials. While unsure how much Deputy Anthony knew of that meeting or how much he (McGilligan) could disclose, he acknowledged that such an interaction had taken place. He refrained from commenting further on the interview to avoid misrepresenting the trade union representative, who had always maintained good relations with the Department.

McGilligan stressed that the matter had not ended with a mere exchange of letters. The concerns were explored in the subsequent interview, and the Department's reply had not contradicted the stance of the Department of Local Government. He noted that the Local Government Department was understood to bear responsibility in the matter. Although Anthony had claimed that the Local Government Department denied any such responsibility, McGilligan clarified that the Commissioner of Cork had been vested with the full authority and responsibilities of the former elected Corporation.

In McGilligan's view, even if the Corporation had still been elected, the Department's position would have remained the same. He explained that his Department typically intervened in industrial disputes either when requested or, occasionally,

of its own initiative. However, the Department did not intervene when one party appeared unwilling to participate in negotiations. In this case, he did not view the dispute as a typical industrial matter, noting that one of the parties—namely, the Commissioner—was acting in the role of a local authority. McGilligan stated that the Department of Local Government effectively stood between his Department and one side of the dispute, though he hesitated to define the precise extent of that barrier.

He did not believe that intervention would serve any useful purpose at that point. Local efforts at conciliation had already been made, and he saw no reason to think his own involvement would yield better results. The information available to him suggested no clear path to agreement. However, McGilligan added that if Deputy Anthony could, in private, offer any indication that an agreement might be possible, he would consider what steps could be taken—even if the Local Government Department remained a limiting factor. He was cautious about intervening in a way that might complicate matters further and reiterated that, based on current information, intervention would not be beneficial. Finally, he emphasised that he did not wish to engage in any discussion about the merits of the dispute. If he were to intervene at a later stage, it would be preferable for him not to have publicly debated the issue beforehand.[60]

In September 1928, an article by the '*Cork Examiner*' expressed the long-held view that Cork Harbour had often been considered one of the finest natural harbours in the world—a status owed primarily to its natural formation. In the opinion of the piece, its location on the direct maritime route between Europe and North America added further to its strategic importance. The harbour's breadth and shelter were such, the article recounted, that a notable admiral was once able to evade his pursuers by leading his fleet into the harbour, up the Carrigaline River, and hiding in the spot later known as Drake's Pool—remaining undetected even

[60] *Dáil Éireann debate - Wednesday, 18 Apr 1928. Vol. 23 No. 1*

after his enemies entered the harbour and left again, unaware of his presence.

From a commercial perspective, the article argued that Cork Harbour had long been an invaluable asset to the city's economy. However, the writer asserted that harbour shelter alone was insufficient for modern shipping needs. The construction of Cork's quays and the continued dredging of the River Lee were cited as evidence that earlier generations had understood this well. These efforts, the article claimed, enabled large cargo steamers to dock safely in the city even in the present day. Nevertheless, the article observed that, for several years, there had been general agreement that the port's infrastructure also required further improvement. According to the piece, the Cork Harbour Board had shown awareness of this by commissioning an American harbour expert—at significant cost—to advise on enhancements needed to elevate Cork to the status of a first-class port.

The article criticised the subsequent progress of the so-called "Tivoli Scheme," launched to expand the quay facilities on the northern bank of the river. While acknowledging that the project had moved forward steadily, the article insisted that even the most casual observer could see that it was advancing far too slowly. It noted that this issue had become a regular topic at the Harbour Board's weekly meetings and had also been raised by Mr. Richard Anthony, T.D., at a recent meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council. Mr. Anthony, whose remarks the article endorsed, reportedly described the delays in implementing the Tivoli Scheme as "tragic" in terms of the city's industrial development. He highlighted that even a single acre of reclaimed land under the scheme remained unready for development. As a result, according to his claims, £60,000 that might have been invested on that site was redirected to Dublin. The article accepted this as a serious loss—not only because of the diverted funds but also because the building would have provided long-term income through taxes, duties, and employment.

The article further stressed that this stagnation had occurred despite a favourable context: labour was readily available, and loans for economically productive public works were relatively easy to secure. It expressed concern that no public explanation had yet been offered for the delay. The writer asserted that if an explanation existed, the public was entitled to hear it. The article also drew attention to another issue raised by Mr. Anthony at the same meeting. He alleged that "certain vested interests" effectively controlled the majority of Cork's quays. Supporting this claim with an excerpt from a legal document, he called into question the fairness of these arrangements. The article encouraged the Harbour Board, which it credited for generally supporting Cork's commercial interests, to examine whether these monopolistic claims were inequitable or unreasonable. It further argued that the Board should also respond meaningfully to the Trades Council's resolution urging faster progress on the Tivoli reclamation works.

The opinion piece appears to have championed Cork City's economic potential, lamented the apparent slow progress of several vital infrastructure projects, and called for greater transparency and responsiveness from public authorities. The perspective presented was not merely informational but seemingly intended to influence public and political will toward accelerating harbour development, and reassessing the influence of private interests on public infrastructure.[61]

During a Dáil debate at the end of November 1928, as reported by the '*Cork Examiner*,' on a motion for adjournment, Deputy Richard Anthony (Labour, Cork City) strongly criticised the Government's approach to the issue of unemployment. In his view, the Government was adopting what he described as a posture of "benevolent neutrality"—a passive stance that, while perhaps well-meaning, ultimately failed to confront the scale of the problem. He pointed specifically to Cork City, where he claimed there was undeniable and acute distress affecting a large section of the population. As evidence, he cited figures from the Society of

[61] *Cork Examiner 17/9/1928*

St. Vincent de Paul, which had reportedly provided relief to 3,163 families in the past year—representing approximately 14,000 individuals in need.

Anthony further noted the public's desperate demand for work by referencing a recent initiative by the Cork Harbour Commissioners. When the Commissioners announced a small number of relief works, intended to provide short-term employment, 500 to 600 individuals applied for positions, though only 40 to 50 jobs were actually available. To him, this illustrated both the severity of unemployment and the lack of adequate response. He then posed a direct question: Was the Cork City Commissioner authorised to allocate Corporate funds toward relief works for the unemployed? He argued that if such powers existed, they should be utilised immediately. He also criticised the state of Cork's poorer neighbourhoods, claiming that many smaller streets, especially in slum areas, were overwhelmed with filth—conditions that, in his view, would not have been tolerated under the former elected city Corporation. He insisted that public works to improve sanitation and street conditions were needed not only to provide employment, but also as a public health measure. Anthony then called on the Government to address unemployment directly and urgently, asserting that the issue could no longer be deferred. He also raised concerns about important pending legislation, suggesting that the Dáil should sit longer to deal with these matters properly. Specifically, he proposed that it would be more effective to extend the current session until mid-December, rather than adjourning and returning early in the new year only to sit late into the evenings.

Deputy Anthony's contribution appeared to reflect a deep concern then prevalent, dealing with that of local hardship, particularly in Cork city, and presented a strong critique of perceived governmental inertia. He tied together social welfare, urban hygiene, and legislative planning, arguing that unemployment could not be separated from public health, dignity, and proper governance. His remarks suggested a frustration with centralised decision-making, especially in the

absence of a locally elected council, and a desire for more active, responsive government intervention.[62]

The Oireachtas subsequently enacted the "Cork City Management Act, 1929" on 23 February, 1929, to implement the administration of the administrative and financial affairs of the 'County Borough of Cork.' The Act stipulated the election of a City Council consisting of twenty-one members, six Aldermen, and fifteen Councillors. The seven members who had served the longest in office retired annually through rotation, and the vacancies that resulted were filled during a Borough Election that took place between June 23 and July 1. Three years were the terms of office for the new members, of whom the first two were elected as Aldermen.[63]

At the conclusion of April 1929, a meeting of Cork Corporation was held, where estimates for public works were examined. The City Manager declared, in response to an issue raised by Mr. Ellis at the General Purposes Committee, proposals were outlined for a significant programme of road reconstruction works across Cork City. For example, Evergreen Road (3,135 yards), Summerhill South (1,772 yards), and Anglesea Street (700 yards) were scheduled to be tar-sprayed. Evergreen Street and Curragh Road (up to the Borough Boundary) were to be resurfaced using a cement-bound finish, while High Street (170 yards) was to receive a water-bound macadam surface. Further roads proposed for tar-spraying included St. Luke's Cross (6,500 yards), Wellington Road (9,174 yards), Ballyhooley Road (3,600 yards), Victoria Road (5,468 yards), College Road (5,400 yards), and Lough Road (930 yards). Also included were Mulgrave Road, John Redmond Street, Roman Street (2,000 yards), Old Blackrock Road (2,270 yards), St. Finbarr's Road (1,000 yards), Sunday's Well Road (2,000 yards), and Coronas Street (520 yards). A number of streets were to be asphalted, such as Connell Street (700 yards), Sawmill Street (1,200 yards), and Rutland Street (300 yards), the last of

[62] *Cork Examiner 1/12/1928*

[63] *History of the Council - Charters. Cork City Council*

which was to receive a six-inch concrete surface. Other roads, including John Street Upper (1,400 yards), Montenotte (2,000 yards), and Green Street (6,000 yards), were to be finished with cement-bound macadam. Grattan's Green (600 yards) and Crosser Quay (600 yards) were listed for resurfacing using six-inch reinforced fibre concrete. Additional plans called for Friar's Walk (6,600 yards), Blarney Street, and Friary Lane to receive water-bound macadam, while Donovan's Road (2,600 yards) would be treated with cement-bound macadam.

During the discussion of these plans, Councillor Gamble raised strong objections to the omission of Grattan Street, arguing that no street in the main area of Cork city was in worse condition or more deserving of immediate attention. The City Manager responded that the primary obstacle was the severely degraded state of the sewerage infrastructure beneath Grattan Street. No roadwork could proceed until the archway in Sheares Street was reconstructed. Councillor Gamble expressed dissatisfaction with this explanation and demanded a clear timeline for the works. The City Manager stated that, under current circumstances, it would not be possible to begin work on Grattan Street for another twelve months. However, he added that if the Council were willing to allocate approximately £7,000, the project could potentially be carried out within the year. He acknowledged that there were several other streets he would like to see included in the reconstruction plans, but the necessary funding was simply not available. Councillor Horgan supported Councillor Gamble's concerns, stating that some of the streets currently scheduled for resurfacing should be de-prioritised in favour of Grattan Street. He proposed that a sub-committee be appointed to review the list of proposed works and to consider amendments that would reflect the most urgent needs of the city.

Sir John Fitzgerald seconded the motion, which was passed, with the committee to consist of as many members as could possibly attend. Following this, the public works estimates were adopted. Mr. Horgan then raised an objection to the current system of placing domestic refuse outside the doors

of city houses. While he acknowledged there may be some cost savings associated with the system, he argued that it had led to an unprecedented level of illegal dumping. He described it as a common and disgusting sight to see communal bins overflowing with cabbages and filth. In many cases, refuse bins were left sitting at doorways for hours on end. In his view, it would be well worth an additional halfpenny in the pound to restore the old system. In response to a query from Mr. Watson about what the old system had entailed, Mr. Horgan explained that under the previous arrangement, public health workers would enter the houses and remove the refuse directly. The City Manager clarified that the difference in cost between the old and current systems amounted to three or four thousand pounds per year. He noted that the previous method required a significant amount of time, as workers had to knock on doors, enter homes, and manually remove the waste. He added that the inconvenience of having bins left outside doorways would be addressed as soon as the reorganisation of the service was complete.

Mr. Barry asked who was responsible for the condition of the back lanes. The City Manager replied that responsibility rested with the gangers of the various districts, the Assistant City Engineer, the City Engineer, and, ultimately, himself. Mr. Barry responded, "But you can't be all over the city." The City Manager acknowledged the point, saying, "I do a fair amount of it." Mr. Barry continued, "I know you do, and I give you credit for it, but the lanes are in a disgraceful condition."

The City Manager invited Mr. Barry to name any specific location, promising to tighten administration in that district. "If necessary," he said, "I will dismiss every sweeper who is neglecting his duty. I will dismiss every ganger who is neglecting his job. If you can prove the Assistant City Engineer is neglecting his job, I will dismiss him; if you can prove the City Engineer is neglecting his job, I will dismiss him—and if you think I am neglecting my job, you can dismiss me."

Mr. Cudmore interjected, saying, "As far as I can see, there is a set being made against the City Manager. Do the members remember when we were up to our ankles in mud?" Mr. Barry objected to this suggestion, stating, "I must take exception to that remark. This has been a most dignified discussion." He added, "We don't come here to attack anybody. There was nothing personal in any of the remarks." Mr. Horgan then spoke, saying, "As I may have been indirectly the cause of this, I may say I make no apology to anybody. I had no intention of offending anyone, but as long as I am sent here by the people, I will mention the things that concern them."

The Lord Mayor intervened, saying he believed Mr. Cudmore was entirely wrong in assuming there was an attack on the Manager. "It is only natural," he said, "that members should be inquisitive on Mr. Monahan's first budget. If any remark was passed that reflected on the City Manager or any other official, I would be the first to take exception to it." Mr. Hill agreed, adding, "And the Council would support you." The Lord Mayor concluded, "I don't think anything said today was meant in a hostile spirit."

Mr. Sutton added, "I've listened to the whole discussion, and it never entered my mind that an attack was being made." Mr. Barry concurred, saying, "We are not in the habit of doing so."[64]

[64] *Cork Examiner 1/5/1929*

Construction work in Cork City.

A COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN, 1930-1935

At a city council meeting in February 1930, the City Manager submitted a report to the Lord Mayor and members of the council outlining the financial requirements for the city for the upcoming year, ending on 31st March 1931. He indicated that, if the proposals were approved, a rate of 18 shillings and 10 pence in the pound would be necessary, compared to 18 shillings and 7 pence in the current year. He acknowledged that by modifying some proposals, the normal operations of the city could be managed on a rate of 18 shillings and 1 penny. However, given the general improvement in city trade, he had recommended proceeding with a much more ambitious programme than had previously been attempted. The estimates included the repayment of the first instalment of new loans totalling £10,000, which the City Manager proposed to borrow that year. Of this amount, £7,500 was allocated for laying a new 18-inch water main from the Waterworks to South Gate Bridge, in response to numerous complaints regarding inadequate water supply in the Blackrock and Friar's Walk areas. An additional £1,700 was designated to provide proper sewerage at Dillon's Cross, where many houses still used dry-earth closets. The Fire Brigade was set to receive £1,150 to acquire updated equipment. A further £3,000 was to be withdrawn from the Waterworks Account balance to coat the interior of the city's reservoirs with asphalt. This was deemed necessary to prevent leakage that could ultimately jeopardise the water supply. Additionally, it was expected to enhance water quality by inhibiting vegetation growth inside the reservoirs.

The sum allocated for paving footpaths increased by £2,000, with plans to renew most of the paths in the lower parts of the city. A list of proposed works was provided. The City Manager acknowledged that the work could be deferred if increasing the rates was deemed unwise, but he reminded the council that the city's footpaths lagged behind modern standards, detracting from the city's overall appearance. He

believed it would be unwise to postpone efforts to address the significant backlog of work in this area.

Road construction and maintenance also saw an increase of £2,500 in funding. Plans included concreting Sheares Street, Grattan Street, and Sawmill Street, as well as asphalting several smaller streets where traffic was causing dust and mud. A significant portion of the road maintenance budget was allocated for steam-rolling roads not subject to heavy traffic, particularly between Collins' Barracks and Mayfield Church on the Old Youghal Road. The usual road grant was expected to cover the concreting of Victoria Quay, with any surplus directed toward asphalting Coburg Street and part of Pope's Quay near North Gate Bridge. These projects were considered too urgent to delay. The City Manager suggested seeking a substantial contribution from the Harbour Commissioners toward the cost of surfacing Victoria Quay, as the area was increasingly used for storing goods rather than regular traffic. A formal proposal had been submitted to the Commissioners, and a response was awaited. Sewerage works required £1,250 less than the previous year, which had seen major activity at Sunday's Well. The ongoing capital works at Sheares Street were expected to come in under budget, allowing the balance to be used for reconstructing the Copley Street sewer. Like the Sheares Street sewer, it was a large underground archway that had collapsed multiple times but had not yet been repaired.

There was an increase in funding for tuberculosis treatment. The City Manager expected a grant to offset the costs for treating insured persons, avoiding any increase in expenditure from the rates. The budget for diphtheria immunisation had also risen significantly, as parents were increasingly availing of the treatment. Results had been positive, and a higher number of children were expected to participate in the coming year. Plans were in place to appoint an assistant to the Medical Officer of Health, with responsibilities focusing on child welfare and tuberculosis prevention. The Tuckey Street Library was to be repurposed as a Central Child Welfare and School Children's Clinic. £300 was earmarked for necessary renovations to the

premises, and £250 was allocated to equip a Central Meat Inspection Depot. New by-laws were expected to be introduced prohibiting the sale of meat in the city unless inspected and stamped by the city's veterinary officer.

An additional £1,500 was included in the budget to purchase two new electric scavenging vehicles, as the current fleet had been overworked during the winter months. Their increased operational costs accounted for a £500 rise in the street cleaning and scavenging estimate. The Public Works Fund also included £500 for improvements to the School of Art, particularly painting and upgrading the heating system, which had long been inefficient and costly to maintain. Modern gas radiators were planned to replace the current system. The painting of Roche's and Barrett's Buildings was also included, along with maintenance of public seating and ironwork across the city. The City Manager noted a change in how the estimates were presented. Loan charges, instead of being shown in bulk, were now itemised alongside relevant revenue expenditure to provide a clearer and more accurate picture of the costs associated with each service.

Threepence of the borough rate was allocated to reduce the deficit on the Public Works Fund. As of 31st March 1925, the deficit stood at £30,000; it was expected to be reduced to £17,000 by 31st March 1931. The City Manager welcomed the significantly reduced demand from the Board of Public Assistance, which reflected better citywide conditions. Conversely, a slight increase was anticipated in the Mental Hospital's demand. The allocation for blind persons' pensions increased by £800, due to rising enrolment as the scheme became better known. As the Mental Hospital's official figures were not available at the time of printing, last year's allocation was retained in the current budget. Finally, the City Manager reported that £500 was included for the renovation of Parliament Bridge, in accordance with Council directives. This sum represented the estimated cost of replacing the existing concrete beams.[65]

[65] *Cork Examiner 20/2/1930*

Interestingly, in April 1930, the Public Works Committee submitted a recommendation refusing the application of Nora Bean Ní Mhartúin, Thomas McCurtain, 69 Shandon Street, for permission to place a scroll on St. Patrick's Bridge to advertise the sale of Easter Lilies. The recommendation was approved without any comment or discussion.[66]

During June of 1930, at a meeting of the Public Works Committee, the following matters were discussed, such as the minutes recording that the City Engineer had reported on inquiries made with the City Engineers of Dublin and Belfast regarding the requirement for the floors of bulk petrol tank surrounds to be petrol-tight. It appeared from both replies that such a requirement was not customary in the case of large tanks located at oil company depots. However, it was noted that the petrol depots in both cities were situated in isolated areas, far from densely populated districts, and therefore could not be considered a direct precedent for Cork. The City Engineer highlighted that the primary reason for recommending fully petrol-proof containers in Cork was the proximity of the depots to densely populated areas, the river, and the low-lying area near the Ford Works. He expressed little doubt that without such containment, a ruptured tank could result in petrol flooding both the river and surrounding areas. It was therefore directed that petrol-proof containers be specified for all bulk petrol tanks in Cork. Mr. Ellis raised concerns about the proximity of petrol tanks to adjacent premises. The City Manager responded by stating that the greatest protection the Corporation could propose would be the installation of water tanks around the petrol containers. Mr. Sutton remarked that valuable adjoining properties could be seriously affected in terms of insurance or safety, especially in the event of faulty tanks or pipes. He questioned whether the Corporation had any control over the pipework and stressed the importance of safeguarding public interest. The City Manager confirmed that the Corporation generally had control over the pipes, and that the petrol companies were cooperative and willing to meet safety standards. He emphasised that while pipework

[66] *Evening Echo 16/4/1930*

was a minor issue compared to the risk of a tank explosion, the Corporation had already required companies to provide waterproof containers to prevent widespread petrol spillage. Regarding fire precautions, Alderman Daly asked whether the Corporation had the authority to compel the installation of efficient fire-fighting apparatus at sites storing petrol tanks. He feared that in the event of a burst, petrol could spill into the river and ignite, causing widespread damage. Mr. Sutton noted that in other cities, safety was ensured by keeping tanks away from hazardous locations. The City Manager assured the committee that Cork's level of protection was on par with that of any other city globally. The discussion on this topic concluded without further comment.

Turning to the matter of the Show Grounds approach (Centre Park Road), Mr. Desmond renewed his request for repairs to be carried out on the road leading to the Show Grounds in time for the upcoming event. The City Manager responded that the matter had not been overlooked. The road, used only a few days each year, was known locally as the "Boggy Road," and would remain in poor condition unless a concrete surface or similar improvement was laid. However, he noted that funding for such a project was not currently available, and only patchwork repairs could be carried out in the meantime. Mr. Sutton argued that a permanent solution was necessary, noting that the road had become an important alternative route for traffic heading to Blackrock, as the main Blackrock Road was, by now, overburdened. He observed that in Dublin, significant efforts were made to support show organisers. Mr. Desmond added that the Agricultural Society went to great lengths to make the Show attractive, effectively serving as a major industrial exhibition that drew large crowds to Cork City. He emphasised that the city should support the initiative, especially as it aligned with government-backed agricultural improvements. Mr. Barry also supported the appeal for more permanent road works, if not immediately, then in the near future. He highlighted that the Show was growing in importance each year and noted recent press reports indicating full occupancy of exhibition space for the upcoming event. In response, the City Manager stated that a

rough estimate put the cost of fully repairing the road at £3,000, and the city Corporation would review what could be done in due course.[67]

At a Cork Corporation meeting in August 1930, Mr. Horgan drew attention to an item in the minutes of the Public Works Committee, which recorded the directive to purchase three street orderly barrows from Municipal Supplies Ltd., Edinburgh, for use in street scavenging, at a cost of £12 each. He argued that such vehicles could easily be manufactured in Cork City and that, at the very least, inquiries should be made to determine whether local production was possible and at what cost. Mr. Barry recalled that, during a previous discussion, the City Manager had indicated that one barrow was being acquired as a sample and that there would be no further imports. Mr. Gamble also voiced his protest and cited the recently built ambulance as an example of the high standard of local workmanship. The City Manager responded by stating that he did not believe he had given any commitment not to purchase additional units. Rather, he had indicated that the first barrow was being bought as an experiment. He assured the committee that, if it wished, he would advertise for tenders in future to see whether anyone locally could supply the barrows at the same price. However, he noted that a recurring issue with local coach-builders was their failure to complete commissioned work on time. Mr. Barry proposed a straightforward solution, suggesting that the Corporation workshop—currently idle—could take on the task, particularly as there were many unemployed individuals qualified for that type of work. The Lord Mayor concluded that inquiries would be made, and the City Manager would report back at the next meeting.[68]

In early December of 1930, Cork Corporation had adopted a committee recommendation asserting that inquiries ought to be made regarding the matter of the possibility of raising

[67] *Cork Examiner 4/6/1930*

[68] *Evening Echo 6/8/1930*

sufficient funds for the construction of a new City Hall, as well as a School of Commerce.[69]

At a meeting of the Cork Corporation in mid-December 1930, on the topic of Relief Schemes, Mr. O'Sullivan referred to the Government's decision to allocate £300,000 for the relief of distress and noted that the Dublin Corporation had already secured or been promised £25,000 from this fund. He emphasised that it was time for the Cork Corporation to apply for its share of the money, particularly in light of the significant unemployment affecting the city.

The City Manager responded that, anticipating the question, he had instructed the City Engineer to assess which works could reasonably be undertaken to alleviate unemployment. The Engineer had provided estimates for two major schemes: the concreting of the Mardyke and the Lough improvement project. These were considered the most suitable projects at the time. He explained that two conditions were attached to the grants: first, that the men employed had to be recruited through the Labour Exchange; and second, that the cost of materials for any project would have to be covered by the local authority, with only the wages being paid from the grant. Consequently, he advised that the most beneficial use of the grant would be on projects with high labour content and minimal material costs. While the materials required for concreting the Mardyke would be expensive, the Lough scheme would be predominantly labour-intensive.

Alderman Allen highlighted the need to improve footpaths in areas such as Fahy's Buildings, describing it as a particularly necessary project. Mr. Gamble supported the City Manager's suggestion, noting that the Mardyke was heavily used by schoolchildren on their way to Fitzgerald Park and that its improvement would be highly desirable. Mr. Horgan agreed, stating that the Mardyke was once a source of civic pride and was now in urgent need of refurbishment. Mr. O'Sullivan added humorously that the priority should be to secure the money first, after which there would be no shortage of

[69] *Cork Examiner 3/12/1930*

proposed schemes. Mr. Barry suggested improvements to Evergreen Street, particularly the area near the boys' school adjoining the Presentation Convent, which he described as being in a filthy and deplorable condition. The Lord Mayor concluded with a light-hearted remark that the best approach would be for everyone to send their suggestions directly to the City Manager.

In response to Alderman Allen, the City Manager stated that between 124 and 130 men were employed on the Christmas work, and that they would remain employed until after Christmas. He confirmed that no additional workers would be taken on. Replying to a query from Mr. Barry regarding the dismissal of 15 men working at Turner's Cross the previous Thursday—and the resulting loss of four days' wages as well as Labour Exchange benefits until the following Wednesday—the City Manager explained that the men had been laid off due to the non-arrival of materials. He noted that such delays were sometimes unavoidable and that the Corporation could not always prevent them. However, he added that the men would likely be re-employed once the necessary materials had arrived.[70]

During a city council meeting in February 1931, in reply to Mr. Horgan, the City Manager stated that, regarding the application for Government funding for relief work, a response had been received indicating that a definite decision would be made by the end of the week. The matter had not yet been formally decided. When Mr. Horgan further inquired whether the current year's overdraft had increased compared to the previous year, Mr. Monahan responded that he could not say offhand, but believed the figure would be roughly the same. Mr. O'Sullivan issued a strong complaint about the City Manager's inaction in acquiring Griffin's Fields, which had previously been agreed upon as a suitable location for a housing scheme for the north side of the city. He expressed frustration at what he described as the scandalous neglect of the north side and questioned whether this area was to remain the "Cinderella" of Cork. The City

[70] *Cork Examiner 17/12/1930*

Manager responded that progress was dependent on forthcoming legislation from the Department, and until this legislation was introduced, they were unable to move forward. Alderman Allen argued that waiting on such legislation could take years, and he supported Mr. O'Sullivan's position that immediate action was needed for the north side. Mr. Foley noted that progress had been made, referencing a general survey of city housing sites under consideration by the Corporation. However, Mr. O'Sullivan contended that Mr. Foley was referring to the proposed national scheme, which he insisted was separate from the Griffin's Fields proposal. Mr. Foley maintained that the Griffin's Fields project was part of the national scheme. Mr. O'Sullivan disagreed, and urged that something tangible be done immediately by the City Manager to acquire Griffin's Fields. The City Manager explained that the housing plan comprised three interconnected components, none of which could proceed independently. He outlined a sequence: first, acquiring new land for building; second, relocating tenants from existing houses; and third, demolishing those houses to allow construction. Building on Griffin's Fields without first securing the existing occupied houses, he said, would lead to the breakdown of the entire North-East clearance scheme. Mr. O'Sullivan accused the City Manager of favouring the South, East, and West of the city, claiming he viewed the North through "smoked glasses." Mr. Horgan then questioned what the city Corporation had actually decided on the matter and requested the minutes from the relevant meeting. As it would take time to retrieve those minutes, the Lord Mayor suggested adjourning the discussion until they could be produced. This suggestion was agreed upon. The Lord Mayor proposed the following motion:

> *"We hereby make application to the Minister, under Section 8 of the Cork City Management Act, 1929, for an order directing that the powers, functions, and duties of the Corporation in relation to the disposition (otherwise than by demise for a term not exceeding one year) under the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Acts, 1840 to 1880, of lands, tenements, and hereditaments belonging to the Corporation shall be exercised and performed directly by the Council."*

Mr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously. The Cork Vocational Education Committee submitted a request for the Council to raise a supplementary loan of £148 7s. 4d to cover the cost of extras incurred during the extension of the Vocational Institute premises. The City Manager advised that, as a general policy, the Committee should be encouraged to pay the amount from revenue, given that the sum was too small to justify a loan. Mr. O'Leary remarked that much of the additional cost stemmed from stipulations made by the City Engineer, and therefore, the Council should agree to the request. The matter was left to the City Manager, who would consult with the Secretary of the Vocational Committee. A letter was received from the Commissioners of Public Works, drawing attention to the National Monuments Act, 1930, and urging the Council to exercise their responsibilities under the Act to protect and preserve national monuments. The letter also suggested that forming an Advisory Committee should be one of the first steps taken. The City Manager stated that he would investigate the matter and submit a report.[71]

In May 1931, at a meeting of Cork Corporation, arising from the report of the City Engineer on public works, Mr. Barry drew attention to the alleged conduct of Ganger Mahony towards the men under his supervision at Summerhill South. In response, the City Manager stated that Mahony was considered one of the best gangers employed by the city. He noted that every task entrusted to Mahony had been completed to the Corporation's satisfaction. Mr. Good remarked that the use of inappropriate or bad language by someone in Mahony's position was highly regrettable, suggesting that a word from the City Manager might go a long way in correcting the behaviour. The City Manager reiterated that the ganger in question had consistently delivered satisfactory results and had even saved the city Corporation a considerable amount of money. While acknowledging that people occasionally lost their tempers—including members of the Council—he maintained that

[71] *Cork Examiner 5/2/1931*

Mahony's work was judged by those in charge and had met the required standards. Mr. Gamble asserted that, in his view, anyone using foul language should not be retained in the Corporation's employment. The City Manager responded by emphasising that the stories about Mahony were, to his knowledge, second-hand. He invited anyone with a direct complaint to report it to him personally, assuring that he would investigate and address any issues as necessary. Mr. Barry contested this, insisting that in his case the information was not second-hand, as he had personally witnessed the ganger's conduct. Mr. Horgan added that the number of complaints suggested there was likely some substance to them. The City Manager replied that if any councillor wished to request the removal of a staff member, the request would need to be submitted in writing. He stressed that when a person's livelihood was at stake, informal or verbal complaints were not sufficient. Mr. O'Leary stated that if the conduct complained of was proven, he would support the dismissal of the ganger. The City Manager concluded by saying that he would look into the matter and see what could be done.[72]

At a meeting in October 1931, the Public Works report included a note from the City Engineer highlighting ongoing difficulties in getting the Electricity Supply Board (E.S.B.) to properly restore pavements they had disturbed during the laying of cables and related works. The Engineer reported that debris was often left on public thoroughfares for extended periods, which led to the blocking of cully traps and subsequent flooding during rain. As a result, it was directed that prosecutions should be initiated in cases where there was undue delay in addressing these issues. In response to Alderman O'Leary, the City Manager confirmed that he had written to the E.S.B. on several occasions but had received no satisfactory response. He stated that he had come to the conclusion that the only effective course of action was to proceed with prosecutions. Alderman Mr. O'Leary also commended the civic-minded actions of a resident on the Old Youghal Road who had donated a piece of land at the

[72] *Cork Examiner 20/5/1931*

corner of Old Youghal Road and Dillon's Cross. This generous gesture enabled the Corporation to widen the road. Alderman O'Leary suggested that this example of public-spiritedness was one that could be followed in many other cases.[73] At a meeting of the General Purposes Committee, Mr. Hurley asked when the money allowed by the Tramway Company for the replacement of the permanent way would be spent. He noted that there was a great deal of unemployment in the city, and if the Corporation could head the way in spending any money available for public works, it would be very advisable. The City Manager replied by declaring that they would probably have been able to arrange a contract for MacCurtain Street and College Street within the forthcoming six weeks. That would, in his view, be the only immediate work in that direction. Additionally, Mr. Cronin asked whether it was intended to remove the poles in the centre of certain streets, since in some places they were an advantage. To this, the City Manager said that the poles in the two streets mentioned were more of a nuisance and would probably be removed. Alderman Allen had suggested it would be advisable to leave a track for horse-drawn vehicles in those streets. Additionally, Alderman O'Leary queried what type of surface would be put on the streets. The City Manager replied by noting that it would be a mix of asphalt with chippings rolled in. Alderman O'Leary also asked if the Council would have the right to make suggestions. Again, the City Manager responded to him by highlighting that it would largely be up to the Engineer.

Alderman O'Leary believed, in his opinion, that if it were to attract traffic to the South of Ireland Asphalt Company, they would probably get it. He noted that the company was well engaged at present on Corporation staff work, and it would be possible to do the work by direct labour and thus provide some much-needed employment. The City Manager noted that a big asphalt job could not be handled by direct labour alone, and in any case, they did not have the necessary equipment at that time. He posited that if the South of

[73] *Evening Echo 7/10/1931*

Ireland Asphalt Company got the contract, they would probably employ extra men for those tasks.[74]

At an April 1932 meeting of then city council, arising out of the City Manager's report on public works, which related to the acceptance of the Electricity Supply Board's (E.S.B.) tender for public lighting in certain districts—at £13 per annum for each 500-watt lamp and £9 per annum for each 300-watt lamp—the following areas were to be covered:

(a) from the City boundary at Dublin Hill to Coburg Street;
(b) from the City boundary on Douglas Road to Parnell Bridge;
(c) from the former tram terminus at Tivoli to Glanmire Rd. Station.

Mr Hill enquired whether the Cork Gas Company had been invited to tender for the lighting of those particular districts. He stated that he had been informed the Gas Company would have supplied 55 lamps, instead of the proposed 43, and at a price £20 less than the amount specified. He emphasised that the Gas Company was a local enterprise, and he expressed regret at the prospect of it being displaced. Mr Sutton recalled that, some time ago, the City Manager had promised that, before any action was taken, he would present the tenders received from both companies to the Council so that the matter of public lighting could be discussed transparently. However, this had not occurred. The Council was now being asked to confirm a fait accompli. Mr Sutton asked the Manager whether both companies had been evaluated under the same conditions—namely, the same number of lamps and similar basis. He moved that the acceptance of the E.S.B.'s tender not be confirmed. If that motion succeeded, he stated he would then move for the acceptance of the Gas Company's tender. Mr Ellis seconded the motion. The City Manager responded that the matter of public lighting had been discussed at a rates meeting, during which it had been suggested that an even split—half and half—between the E.S.B. and the Gas Company would not be

[74] *Cork Examiner 7/10/1931*

equitable. He explained that, at present, the Council was paying the Gas Company £5,100 per annum for public lighting and, additionally, £3,400 for the lighting and maintenance of gas lamps, bringing the total to £8,500 per year. In contrast, the E.S.B. was currently being paid about £1,900 annually for its public lighting services.

In reply to a question from Mr Hurley regarding the proportion of lighting between the companies, the Manager stated that the Gas Company was providing more than double the service of the E.S.B. Alderman Horgan asked whether the Council had already committed to accepting the E.S.B.'s tender. The City Manager confirmed in response that they had. Alderman Horgan remarked that, in that case, further discussion was essentially futile. The City Manager added that the E.S.B. had provided, and continued to provide, a significant amount of employment in the city. Hundreds of men were engaged in its work, and it seemed unreasonable, he argued, to suggest that such an organisation should receive no public support in return. He stated that if the Council wished to make a formal decision to boycott the E.S.B., he would not object, but he believed it would be an entirely unreasonable position. The Council subsequently confirmed the acceptance of the E.S.B.'s tender. The City Manager then asked for direction regarding the lighting of the new housing scheme at Turner's Cross. He noted that some tenants might prefer electric light while others might favour gas. The Chairman advised that the decision should be left to the tenants themselves.

The City Manager also submitted a report relating to the Council's earlier recommendation to resurface Patrick Street with wooden blocks. This recommendation had been referred to the Minister for Local Government and Public Utilities, who responded by stating that the City's portion of the Road Fund should instead be used to resurface Patrick Street and part of the Grand Parade using asphalt. In response, a deputation from the Masons' Society appeared before the Council. Their spokesman, Mr Walsh, strongly advocated for wood paving, asserting that it was both cheaper and more durable than asphalt. The Council resolved to

request that the Minister reconsider and grant sanction for the resurfacing work to be carried out using wood blocks instead of asphalt.[75]

In July 1932, discussing at a Cork Corporation meeting of matters arising out of the Recommendations on Public Works, Mr Hurley had asked the City Manager if any further practical steps could be taken regarding the relief of unemployment. As all members were aware, he said, they had been stopped in the streets by unemployed men asking them to do something for their wives and children. He believed there were at least 5,000 men unemployed in the core of the City of Cork alone, and, to relieve them, some works of public utility should have been initiated. The City Engineer might have considered a sewerage scheme, but even if that had been deemed too costly, some alternative scheme could have been undertaken, for which he was sure the Government would have played its part. He moved that the Government be called upon to make a grant of £50,000 for the relief of unemployment, and that the City Engineer be instructed to prepare a useful scheme. Alderman French pointed out that an application had already been made for £23,000, and they were only awaiting the money. Mr Hurley said the second part of his resolution could then stand. Alderman O'Leary stated that he thought the sum of £23,000 for Cork was too small, especially since the Urban Council had applied for £63,000. He wished to know on what basis the grants were given.

The City Manager replied that, as far as he knew, the Government had issued a statement indicating that the money would be distributed in proportion to the number of unemployed registered in each area. A circular to that effect had been issued, but owing to the postponement of the last meeting, it had not come before the members. He added that, if the unemployed across the city had taken the immediate opportunity to register at the Exchange, the number of unemployed would certainly have exceeded expectations. Mr Hurley responded that the unemployed

[75] *Cork Examiner 20/4/1932*

were growing tired of registering at the Exchange without any appreciable result. Alderman Horgan again drew attention to the class of citizens he had previously referred to —those not classed as A1—who faced significant difficulty in obtaining employment.

In response to his question regarding when the money would be available, the City Manager stated that, as far as he knew, once a demand was received, a provisional allocation would be made. Regarding the suggestion that an advertisement should be inserted in the press encouraging the unemployed to register at the Exchange, the Town Clerk pointed out that such a notice had already appeared in the press. Mr Barry seconded the motion, which was passed.

On the topic of supposedly dangerous street crossings, with reference to the traffic regulations in the report on hackney carriages, Mr Spillane asked if anything had been done by the Council concerning the location where the Sunday's Well bus stopped to pick up passengers entering the city. He understood that the City Manager had intended to take action on the matter. The City Manager replied that he would mention the matter again. Alderman O'Leary raised the issue of bus stopping places and the need for street signs, which he felt was pressing. He asked the City Manager about the attitude adopted by the bus company towards the Corporation. The City Manager replied that the bus company had pointed out that it had no fixed tenure on Cork streets and that the city Corporation might invite another company to operate there at any time. Therefore, the company had stated that it could not be held responsible for erecting signs. Mr Barry pointed out that a man had recently been killed in Cork. Alderman Horgan added that whoever bore the responsibility, there was certainly a duty to the public. Mr Barry also highlighted the supposedly serious danger posed by parked cars on the streets—particularly along Patrick Street, the Parade, and the Mall. These made it very difficult for moving traffic, in his view, and were even more dangerous for pedestrians. He specifically mentioned Prince's Street and the corner at Woodford Bourne's, where cars were often parked bonnet to bonnet. He believed that

definite regulations had been introduced to prohibit parking entirely and expressed agreement with the recent editorial in the Examiner addressing the issue. The City Manager responded that several prosecutions had been brought in the District Court, but to him, unfortunately, the press merely reported that fines were imposed for breaches of the motor regulations.

Later, on the topic of a new social housing scheme on Bandon Road, Mr Barry drew attention to the fact that, at a previous meeting, which had been adjourned due to a lack of quorum, a resolution had been due for proposal to acquire land at Bandon Road. He felt that every effort should be made to commence building as soon as possible.[76]

In August 1932, at a city council meeting, arising out of the report of the Public Works Committee, which stated that the work on the north-west housing site was almost completed, Alderman Horgan raised concerns regarding the rent levels. He questioned whether it was fair that the cost of roads, sewers, and drainage should be included in the rents of the houses. In his view, such infrastructure costs ought to have been borne by the ratepayers. He posed a hypothetical: if a utility society approached the Corporation with a proposal to construct between 100 and 180 houses, on the condition that the Corporation provided roads, drains, and water supply, would the Corporation not agree to it? He asked whether the costs of such services were being included in the rents in this instance. The City Manager responded that approximately half of the costs had been included. Alderman Horgan remarked that, in that case, the rents should be revised, and he requested that the Manager submit a detailed statement showing the overall cost and how much of it was being charged through the rents. He pointed out that it was very difficult for a man earning £2 10s. or £3 per week to pay 10 shillings in rent, which constituted a significant portion of his income. He emphasised that the objective of constructing these houses was to improve public health, and that savings could ultimately be made by safeguarding the health of the

[76] *Evening Echo 6/7/1932*

people. He further suggested that local T.Ds should raise in the Dáil the issue of extending to Cork housing schemes the benefit of the sliding scale currently allowed to private individuals for new buildings. The City Manager agreed to prepare the statement, as suggested by Alderman Horgan.[77]

At a Cork Corporation meeting in September 1932, arising out of the Public Works reports, Alderman O'Leary enquired about the reconstruction of the Grand Parade, and asked whether there was any possibility of relocating the Berwick Fountain. Alderman Horgan responded, "Oh Lord! There is no chance of that." The Lord Mayor remarked that such a matter would require a notice of motion, prompting laughter from those present. Following this, Mr Cronin requested that the City Manager provide shelters for children in the Lough district. The City Manager replied that such a provision would need to be included in the estimates. Mr Daly then caused some amusement by suggesting, "I think as soon as the Fair is finished, we should purchase this nice little Irish Express and run it around the Lough. Even if we only charge a penny a time, it will pay." No action was taken on any of the matters raised.[78]

At a convening of the Cork Workers' Council during November 1932, the Chairman, referring to the drastic unemployment situation in Cork, particularly among skilled workers, emphasised that public bodies should not withhold work that remained to be done, especially during such a critical time. It was not economically sound to neglect any public project that could be advanced, particularly those involving skilled labour. He was confident that the Corporation, the Harbour Board, and other public entities could do much to alleviate unemployment by immediately proceeding with planned works. While some attention had been given to unskilled workers, he noted that little concern seemed to be shown for skilled tradesmen. He stressed that urgent action was needed to address the serious situation

[77] *Cork Examiner 3/8/1932*

[78] *Cork Examiner 21/9/1932*

faced by these workers. Mr. Barry, T.C., concurred with the Chairman's remarks and stated that the condition of both the interior and exterior of Cork Courthouse was a disgrace to the city. He believed that representations made to the County Council could have a positive effect and result in much-needed employment. He also indicated several other areas in which work could be initiated to provide jobs. He acknowledged the generosity of those who had contributed to the Distress Fund but stated that it would be more beneficial if the funds were directed towards the provision of work. He pointed out that there was a great deal of work to be done in the city and expressed hope that there would be no further delay in continuing with the construction of the Corporation houses.

Mr. Kiely (of the Vehicle Builders' Society) highlighted the unemployment affecting his trade. He observed that many motor cars, lorries, and other vehicles on the roads were in poor condition and believed that their owners could maintain them more effectively. Such maintenance, he suggested, would provide valuable work for members of his trade. Mr. Walsh (representing the Masons) expressed gratitude to those who had come together at the public meeting and contributed generously. However, he stated they would be even more grateful if some of those subscribers who had work pending would commence it. Mr. Casey (representing the Painters) reported that seventy-five per cent of the members of his trade were unemployed. In earlier times, he noted, the Cork Corporation had taken steps to provide work for painters. He remarked that the Cork County Council building was, in fact, deteriorating due to a lack of paint. He believed the Cork Harbour Commissioners could also play a role in relieving the hardship in his trade and help provide a more cheerful Christmas for those affected. He urged the Council's representatives on the city Corporation to raise these issues at the next meeting.[79]

An article by the '*Evening Echo*' in December 1932 reported that the adoption by Cork Corporation of a public scheme of

[79] *Evening Echo 11/11/1932*

assistance for public utility societies under Section 9 of the Housing Act of 1932 had attracted considerable interest not only in Co. Cork but throughout Ireland, as it was the first scheme of its kind since the passing of the new Act. The city Corporation's recommendation, which awaited formal sanction by the Minister for Local Government, consisted of several elements. Among these were that the Corporation would make grants of £50 in cash, or one-ninth of the total cost of each house built for letting by a Public Utility Society. The total amount to be paid in grants was to be £10,000, which was to be raised by the issue of Corporation stock. The land devoted to this scheme was 14 acres at Turner's Cross and partly at Ashburton, acquired for the purpose of housing the working classes. This land was to be leased to Public Utility Societies at such rates as would repay the capital required to purchase and develop the land. The maximum number of houses in respect of which grants were to be made was 200.

In an interview with an "*Echo*" representative that month, the City Manager (Mr P. Monahan) stated on the subject that the Housing Act of 1932 contemplated three forms of building activity:

(1) the clearance of slum areas and the re-housing of inhabitants by local authorities;
(2) the building of houses to be let at weekly rents to the working classes by Public Utility Societies; and
(3) the building of houses by individuals with the assistance of local authorities through the medium of the Acquisition of Small Dwellings Act.

Mr. Monahan had opined that, while the purpose of the Act was praiseworthy, its provisions were vague and uncertain in many respects, particularly those clauses dealing with financial assistance from the Government. Thus, the Government might make grants not exceeding two-thirds of the annual loan charges incurred by a local authority in carrying out a scheme of slum clearance, but the Government did not bind itself to make any grants at all. He noted that local authorities engaged in slum clearance had no

assurance that the Government would accept responsibility for two-thirds of their loan charges or for any portion thereof. This state of affairs, in his view, was unsatisfactory, and in the absence of clear government policy, local authorities were not to be blamed if they proceeded slowly.

He also pointed out that the same criticism applied to the provisions governing grants payable to local authorities who built houses in the ordinary way. There was no guarantee of any grant; there was merely a clause stating that the Minister of Local Government might make a contribution not exceeding one-third of the annual loan charges.[80]

At a January 1933 meeting of the Cork Corporation, the Lord Mayor, Alderman S. French, presided. Arising out of the recommendation of the Public Works Committee to accept the proposal of the Electricity Supply Board for the provision of additional public lamps at Oliver Plunkett Street, Market Avenue, Grafton Street, Sive's Lane, Elbow Lane, Morgan Street, Smith Street, and Beasley Street, Alderman Allen asked whether the Gas Company had been given an opportunity to tender for the supply. The City Manager responded that the general form of lighting in the area was electric, and that it was desirable to maintain uniformity. Following this, Mr Daly asked whether the lighting on North Gate Bridge could be improved. The City Manager replied that the lighting there had recently been improved by 100 per cent. Alderman Morgan remarked that the lighting generally, particularly outside the central parts of the city, required a thorough review. He noted that anyone walking from Patrick Street into the back streets would immediately move from bright lighting into near-darkness. He suggested that the City Manager instruct someone in his department to report on the condition of the lamps in the various outlying areas. Many of the lamps in those places, he added, were obsolete and should be scrapped. The City Manager stated that he would have the matter investigated.[81]

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[80] *Evening Echo 16/12/1932*

[81] *Cork Examiner 4/1/1933*

At a Cork Workers Council meeting in January 1933, the Chairman referred to a dispute that had arisen between representatives of the Distributive Workers' Union and a city firm. Since then, two conferences had taken place and had proven satisfactory. A further conference had been arranged, and he expressed hope that by the next meeting, an amicable resolution would have been reached. Mr O'Gorman mentioned that another dispute had emerged. This involved a member who had been employed at a well-known public house and had since been dismissed. Mr O'Gorman stated that it was believed the reason given by the employer was a trivial one, the real cause being the employee's active involvement in Trade Union affairs. The replacement employee was not a union member, nor did he hold a trade union card. Mr O'Gorman stated that if the dismissed member was not reinstated by Tuesday night, the rest of the staff would be outside the premises on Wednesday morning. The Chairman said he hoped the firm in question would recognise their error and that sounder judgement would prevail. He also commented on the limited amount of work being provided at the Gurranebraher building sites, noting that very few tradesmen or labourers were currently employed there. He expressed the hope that by drawing public attention to the matter, more work would be initiated and employment increased at the site. Mr O'Gorman added that while there were numerous applicants seeking sites to build houses, none were currently available. He noted that landowners were demanding prohibitive prices for land suitable for building, thereby delaying such developments. He argued that the Corporation should exercise compulsory acquisition powers, and that legislation should be introduced to support this course of action.[82]

In April 1933, arising out of a recommendation of the Public Works Committee to accept the tender of Transit, Ltd.—being the lowest of six received—for the supply of a 2-ton service truck, as specified by the City Engineer (on a 2-ton short wheelbase Ford chassis), at £238 5s 0d, the City

[82] *Cork Examiner 16/1/1933*

Engineer, in reply to Mr. Barry, stated that the body of the truck was to be built in Cork city.[83]

During a city council meeting in July 1933, the Lord Mayor stated that he understood Alderman Allen and Mr. Connolly had matters to raise in relation to the contract for the layout in the North-West Ward housing scheme. He informed the Council that he had received an application from a member of the Cork Builders' Labourers' League to be present at the meeting and address the Council. However, he explained that four clear days' notice would have been necessary in such circumstances. Alderman Allen stated that he had previously tabled a motion concerning these contracts, which had been passed at an earlier meeting, wherein it was agreed that preference should be given to local labour in all future contracts. He reported having received information that five men from the city had travelled to the Lower Glanmire district of the city to undertake a job, but were ordered off the site and replaced by local men from that area. He contended that money allocated for public works within the city ought to be spent on employing local labour. He questioned why individuals from outside the city should be permitted to encroach upon the rights of its citizens.[84]

At a meeting of Cork Corporation in August 1933, Alderman Allen drew the attention of the City Manager to an item in the Public Works' report, which stated that the resurfacing of Sunday's Well Avenue in bituminous macadam had been completed. He stated that something should have been applied to the surface of the mart in the area to prevent horses from slipping. He also referred to Wyse's Hill, where the laying of bituminous macadam had likewise been completed. The City Manager responded that they had been very sympathetic with all concerned, but they were reaching an impossible position. The road in question had already been patched with every kind of material for some time. It was, he said, impossible to please everyone. He assured

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[83] *Evening Echo 19/4/1933*

[84] *Cork Examiner 26/7/1933*

Alderman Allen, however, that he would look into the matter. Mr. Connolly also drew the City Manager's attention to the condition of the entrance to Kerry Hall Mart and the pathways leading to Fair Hill. The City Manager promised to give the matter his attention.[85]

In September 1933, at a city council meeting, under the Public Works recommendations, Alderman Allen drew attention to several back streets which, he stated, had been inadequately lit, prompting complaints from local residents. He specifically mentioned Anne Street and Brown's Hill, describing them as being left practically in darkness, where gatherings of people at night were causing nuisance to the inhabitants. He further explained that the repositioning of a public lamp approximately 30 yards further up the street had resulted in Kerry Hall and Waggett's Lane being left unlit. While he acknowledged that the main streets in the vicinity were well illuminated, he noted that some of the adjoining back streets had been neglected. Alderman O'Leary inquired whether a footway could be provided to replace the old bridge at Victoria Road, which he said posed a particular inconvenience—especially for women with perambulators. He referenced a strong statement made by the Minister for Industry and Commerce regarding the condition of such bridges and their eventual replacement. It was possible, he suggested, that the Corporation might find itself burdened with responsibility for bridges which required more suitable construction. The City Manager informed the meeting that the Harbour Board had also been considering the issue of railway bridges and indicated that the Corporation would likely become involved in due course. Mr. Connolly brought attention to a similar situation at Well Avenue, Kerry Hall Terrace, and Peacock Lane. The City Manager responded that he would ensure the complaints were investigated.[86]

At the AGM of the Cork Chamber of Commerce in November 1933, it was noted that, during the year, the civic

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[85] *Cork Examiner 2/8/1933*

[86] *Cork Examiner 20/6/1933*

work carried out by the Council of Cork Corporation, under the managerial system of local government, was highly efficient. The housing problem was being effectively addressed, while essential public works were actively progressing. The City Hall and Municipal Offices were nearing completion on the original site; the houses at Gurranabraher were soon to be ready for occupation, and the Lee Swimming Baths were expected to open to the public at the beginning of the following summer. The main streets, along with many minor roads, had been resurfaced. The building and other by-laws, adopted for the protection of the public, were being enforced efficiently. The city's credit during the year remained so strong that, upon the issue of a new Corporation loan, applications for allotments of stock far exceeded the number of shares available. It was only fitting to note, in their view that the civic co-operation of the members of the Business Party, representing the commercial community, had been particularly helpful to the Corporation in its administration of the city's affairs. The generous action of a public-spirited donor—a successful Cork businessman who wished to remain anonymous—in purchasing the site of the Cork Industrial Fair Grounds and presenting it to the city Corporation for the benefit of the citizens, deserved special mention. The site, being a picturesque one, held the potential to become a much-needed public park in future, in their opinion.[87]

In January 1934, at a meeting of Cork Corporation's General Purposes Committee, when it came to discussing matters under the heading of Public Works, satisfactory progress had been reported on the extension of the filtration plant, the swimming pool at the Lee Fields, and the matter of resurfacing work at Blackpool, from O'Connell Street to the Borough boundary. The report from the Waterworks Resident Engineer also indicated that the daily water consumption per head for both the city and surrounding areas since the last sitting had been 12.0 gallons, compared

[87] *Cork Examiner 22/11/1933*

with 11.3 gallons for the corresponding period the previous year.[88]

During the proceedings of a city council meeting in February 1934, arising from the minutes of the Public Works Committee, Mr Hurley asked whether it would be possible to widen the opening at Murphy's Corner, Turner's Cross. He noted that there was believed to be a constant danger of accidents occurring there to people passing Evergreen Road and travelling in both directions. He had personally witnessed several near-misses which could have been serious. The City Manager replied that he would look into the matter. Mr Connolly drew attention to the entrance of a local school on Peacock Lane, which was used by a considerable number of children attending both the school and St Vincent's Convent. Mr Hurley also enquired whether it would be possible to make the street names at Turner's Cross bilingual. The City Manager explained that in some instances the Irish versions had been omitted, simply because they were too long and inelegant to add to a sign. However, he promised to investigate whether shorter Irish versions could be used and also undertook to address the issue raised by Mr Connolly.

The Department had sanctioned the raising of £10,000 by way of loan or overdraft for the construction of the Lee Fields Swimming Pool, with repayment to take place over a period not exceeding ten years. The Manager reported that the Minister and the Leinster Bank had confirmed that the Bank's directors had authorised the required loan for the swimming pool, along with an additional loan of £5,000 for improvements to the waterworks.[89]

Also in February 1934, it was reported that, on the recommendation of the City Engineer, via the Public Works Committee, that Cork Corporation had decided to purchase, at a cost of £200, one Drumm battery of 200 amps, type R.V., for use with the electric vehicles employed in city

[88] *Evening Echo 3/1/1934*

[89] *Evening Echo 21/2/1934*

cleansing. The battery was to be fitted to one of the vehicles on an experimental basis, and if found to be economical, additional units would be considered for purchase. At that time, the electric vehicles required daily charging—usually carried out at night once street cleaning had concluded. The Drumm battery, having significantly greater capacity, was expected to eliminate the need for daily charging. With ten electric vehicles then in operation, the anticipated savings, should the experiment prove successful, could be substantial. The trial was regarded as particularly noteworthy, as Cork City's Municipal Council was believed to be among the first —if not the very first—public body or commercial entity in the south to adopt this Irish invention, from which much was expected, in the opinion of an article published by the '*Cork Examiner*.'[90]

At a March 1935 meeting of Cork Corporation, a letter was read from the Secretary of the Inter-Departmental Committee of Public Works, Dublin, inviting suggestions for useful public works that would provide the maximum degree of employment to unskilled labour. Mr. James Hickey asked whether funds could be made available for a sewerage scheme, as nothing was more urgently needed. The City Manager replied that if Mr. Hickey meant the main drainage scheme, it was a long and technical process, the preliminaries of which were not yet complete. Furthermore, such a scheme would not fall under the category of works usually expected to be undertaken by a Government Inter-Departmental Committee. Alderman Daly said he understood the public baths had come under such a scheme the previous year, after they were recommended. Mr. Buckley enquired what public works, if any, were specified on which money could be spent. Alderman O'Leary suggested the aerodrome as an example they could propose. The City Manager explained that the letter from the Inter-Departmental Committee stated the works should be intended to relieve unemployment through novel public works schemes—such as those not usually undertaken by public authorities—and which would, at the same time, provide employment for large numbers of the

[90] *Cork Examiner 24/2/1934*

unemployed. In a city of Cork's size, it was extremely difficult to identify such a scheme, and he could not think of one at that moment in time. Alderman O'Leary had proposed that the exhibition grounds, which covered several acres, might be suitable for a botanical garden or stadium. He considered this a reasonable suggestion, likely to involve a high labour content if carried out. Mr. Hurley remarked that the main drainage scheme was one that the Corporation or any local authority would normally undertake. The estimated cost was about a quarter of a million pounds, which would be beyond the scope of any local authority. However, since the scheme would also have a very high labour content, he believed it should be considered under the schemes suggested by the letter. If the Government had allocated money for such purposes, they must apply themselves seriously to obtaining some of it. Mr. Buckley suggested the railway bridge at Albert Road, which belonged to the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway, was now derelict. He proposed its removal and the construction of a proper road to the Marina. The City Manager stated that his interpretation of the letter was that suggestions were invited for works as and when funds became available. Such works should relieve unemployment for large numbers, but there was no indication that money was currently or imminently available. He added that it was difficult to think of a scheme that would employ two or three hundred men. It was decided that members would submit their suggestions to the City Manager, who would forward them to the Inter-Departmental Committee.[91]

In April 1935, the Cork Chamber of Commerce considered the communication from the Inter-Departmental Committee of Public Works, which invited the Chamber to submit suggestions for useful public works. The projects proposed were required to be of a novel nature and designed to provide the maximum employment opportunities for unskilled labour. While various public bodies across the country had suggested works of great desirability, the projects put forward by the Cork Chamber of Commerce were, according to the '*Cork Examiner*,' undoubtedly of practical

[91] *Evening Echo 13/3/1935*

utility to the City of Cork. The Chamber recommended the construction of a modern aerodrome at Farmer's Cross, a site already approved by the Cork Aero Club. It is unnecessary to state that this site had been thoroughly examined and found eminently suitable for an air station. The proposal would offer unskilled workers the opportunity to gain employment over an extended period and would materially benefit the Cork Aero Club, which, as recently emphasised, deserved the support of both the Government and the citizens. Furthermore, the Chamber's Council also recommended the provision of suitable children's playgrounds throughout the city, a matter frequently raised by members of the Cork Corporation.[92]

Also that month, at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Cork Corporation, under the heading of Law and Finance, it was recorded that the Munster and Leinster Bank had sanctioned a much desired loan, totalling £180,000, for the temporary financing of housing schemes and the erection of the City Hall, pending the issue of new redeemable stock. In further relation to Public Works, a sum of £254 17s 10d was allocated as payment to the Cork Harbour Commissioners, in respect of the Corporation's proportion of the cost of painting Parnell Bridge. A letter from the Local Government Department notified approval of the new sewer works at Turner's Cross and the allocation of a 25 per cent grant, subject to a maximum Government contribution of £2,300, with the stipulation that labour be recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. The Committee approved a direction that the G.S.R. (Omnibus Department) be informed of the proposal to remove the structure known as the Firemen's Rest, on Patrick Street, at the end of the current month. In response to a query regarding any changes in the plans for the 106 houses proposed to be erected at Spangle Hill, the City Manager said that each house would include a bathroom.[93]

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[92] *Cork Examiner 10/4/1935*

[93] *Cork Examiner 11/4/1935*

BUILDING A NEW CITY

During a May 1935 Council meeting of the Cork Chamber of Commerce, a report dealing with schemes pertaining to Public Works was raised. The report of the Sub-Committee dealing with this matter was unanimously adopted. The proposals of the Sub-Committee were as follows:

- Take over from the Railway Company the closed and since derelict railway tracks, fill and level the same, and sell the land so recovered to adjoining occupiers, thus returning it to productive use. The sale of this land should more than recoup the price paid to the Railway Company. This scheme would afford maximum employment of unskilled labour over a wide area, with minimal outlay on materials.
- Level the "Camp Field" in Cork, adjoining the Cork Military Barracks, to be used as a public sports ground.
- Concrete the surface of the quay at Ballinacurra, construct an embankment at Tivoli, Cork to enclose part of the reclamation area, and reconstruct Crosshaven Pier. This suggestion was made by the Cork Harbour Board, and full particulars have been forwarded to the Department.
- Whitewash lanes in the poorer and congested districts of the city. Clean and whitewash the quay walls on both branches of the river in Cork.
- Remove stones and clear lands as far as possible in "Congested Districts" and other lands in West Ireland.
- Clean up and level disused plots in cities and towns, which are currently deserted eyesores.
- Construct a bridge in Cork across the river from Lavitt's Quay to Mallow Road. While this is scarcely a paying proposition for the Cork Corporation, it would provide much employment and be a useful work.
- Construct shelters for working men where they usually congregate, either to take their meals or to rest.
- Construct a small theatre in Cork, as suggested by Mr. O'Flynn, President of the Cork Shakespearean Society. While not a paying proposition in the ordinary sense, it could be justified, in their view, on the grounds of employment and the advancement of culture.

Additionally, it was decided to add that the issue of bridges crossing over or under railway lines had come up, and that

removing these bridges followed by levelling or filling the area could be both cost-effective and improve traffic safety, especially on main roads. This plan was seen as a way to provide extensive employment for unskilled workers across a large area while keeping material costs low.[94]

At a July 1935 city council meeting, the Public Works report included a statement from the City Engineer that the demolition of the houses under the slum clearance scheme at the North West Ward site is now completed, and that the demolition of houses on Broad Lane is currently in progress.[95]

In November 1935, at a heated Cork Corporation meeting, a letter was read from the Organising Council of the Public Works, Roads, and Transport Congress and Exhibition, inviting delegates to attend the Eighth Congress to be held in London from the 18th to the 23rd of the month. Alderman Allen proposed that no one should be sent, arguing that it was not the right time to spend money. Mr. D. Buckley seconded this motion. Mr. O'Leary, however, suggested that if the City Engineer would benefit from attending, then he should be allowed to go. Mr. Buckley maintained that sending delegates was a waste of money since nothing productive resulted from such meetings. Alderman Anthony criticised the discussion, stating that it revealed the narrow-mindedness of some council members. At this point, Mr. Buckley interrupted, prompting Alderman Anthony to tell him to sit down, using an insulting term. Mr. Buckley objected and requested that the remark be withdrawn, suggesting that Alderman Anthony might be a greater fool than himself. Alderman Anthony responded by urging Buckley to conduct himself properly. The Lord Mayor intervened, noting that Mr. Buckley had interrupted and that Alderman Anthony's comment was inappropriate and should be withdrawn. Alderman Anthony complied, saying he was man enough to do so. He continued by stating that, in

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[94] *Cork Examiner 23/5/1935*

[95] *Cork Examiner 25/7/1935*

practice, such congresses were usually considered beneficial. Mr. S. MacSwiney recalled that when delegates had been sent previously, no report had been received. He pointed out that those who had supported sending delegates before were now opposed, due to the lack of feedback. Although he favoured sending delegates, he insisted that they should be required to report back. The Lord Mayor expressed his satisfaction that any knowledge gained by the City Manager and City Engineer at the Congress was made available to all members of the Corporation. He noted that it was common for elected members attending a congress to report back, but officials did not usually provide reports. Mr. O'Leary then proposed an amendment to send the City Engineer and the Lord Mayor to the Congress. Alderman Anthony seconded the amendment, which was carried by 19 votes to 2, defeating Alderman Allen's original motion.[96]

[96] *Cork Examiner 6/11/1035*

Inner-city slum clearance would become a major public works effort.

MUNICIPAL DREAMS, FINANCIAL REALITIES, 1936-1939

At the annual meeting of the Cork City Unemployed Party in March 1936, Councillor D. G. Buckley emphasised the need for solid co-operation and decisive action among the unemployed within the Party in the coming year. He stated that the Unemployed Party would ensure that, on all future employment schemes, first preference for work would be given to men residing in the city. He strongly asserted that no employer would be permitted to hire outside workers while capable men remained unemployed in Cork. Mr. Buckley went on to say that the Unemployed Party would demand that food, clothing, and other necessities of life—essential in any Christian society—be provided as a right to every citizen. The Party would also actively work to eliminate the appalling slum conditions that persisted in Cork. He further stated that the Unemployed Party would also campaign for the municipalisation of the city's bus services, cinemas, and dance halls. These, he argued, should be brought under the control of the Cork Corporation and operated in the best interests of the people. Currently, he said, most of the revenue generated by these establishments flowed out of the city and country. If brought under municipal control, however, these funds would be retained in Cork and channelled into the Corporation's treasury. This, Mr. Buckley contended, would reduce the excessively high rates—potentially by half—and would create significant employment opportunities for the city's jobless through new public works and development schemes.[97]

In August 1936, at a meeting of the city council, a letter was read aloud to the effect that a grant of £9,800 had been provisionally made available, with the stipulation that a matching contribution of £9,800 from local sources was also required, making a total sum of £19,600. This funding was intended for a scheme involving road or footpath works. Where works financed through the Road Fund were already

[97] *Evening Echo 2/3/1936*

in progress during the early winter period, additional road works funded under a relief grant would only be authorised if necessary to supplement existing expenditure from the Road Fund. Accordingly, the local authority was requested to submit, as soon as possible, a proposal—using the annexed form—detailing a scheme to utilise the full £19,600. The proposal was to include an indication of how the Council intended to provide its share of the cost. Should any further grants be made available before the end of the financial year, they would be subject to the same conditions. It was further noted that the primary purpose of this grant was to provide employment for persons in receipt of Unemployment Assistance. As such, the scheme submitted for approval should prioritise work that required a high proportion of unskilled labour (excluding gangers and carters). All labour was to be recruited through the local unemployment exchange.

During the discussion that followed, Mr. Quill asked whether any investigations were made into wage rates paid in the construction of houses before certificates under the Housing Acts of 1932 were issued. The City Manager responded that the Corporation was not required to verify wage conditions. Their role was limited to certifying the dimensions of the houses, as defined by the Act. The Corporation, he stated, had no role in enforcing Acts of Parliament; the City Engineer's duty was to ensure that houses conformed to size and structural standards. He clarified that the grant in question was paid by the Department of Local Government, not the city Corporation. Mr. Quill remarked that their only role regarding the grants was to issue certification. The City Manager agreed, confirming again that the Corporation had no further involvement. Mr. D. G. Buckley commented, in criticism, that some Labour members (in reference to Quill) should practise what they preached. Mr. Hickey called that sort of remark "the usual tripe." Mr. J. M. Buckley voiced support for Mr. Hickey. Mr. Quill responded that such exchanges had become typical and were to be expected.

The City Engineer's report on progress across various works outlined the following:

(a) Concreting of Travers Street had been completed, while work on Goldsmith's Avenue was ongoing.
(b) Good progress continued on the storm sewer at Turner's Cross.
(c) Demolition work was underway at No. 8 Step Lane, No. 31 Bailey's Lane, and Whitley's Place.
(d) A new sewer had been laid at Keyser's Hill, and concreting of the step landings was nearing completion.
(e) Un-asphalting of Fairy Lane had been completed, and the same was in progress at Frenche's Villas.
(f) Painting was underway at St. Finbarr's Cemetery and the Public Library.
(g) The northern portion of the works at Albert Quay had been completed, with progress continuing on the southern section.
(h) Repairs to dwellings and asphalt maintenance were ongoing, with a workforce of 30 mechanics and 111 labourers employed across the various projects.

Mr. Quill, referring to item (b), suggested that a traffic officer be stationed at the junction of Anglesea Street and South Terrace due to heavy traffic in the area. It was agreed that this recommendation would be forwarded to the Civic Guards.

The Town Clerk also read a letter from the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, stating that it was proposed to make a 50% contribution from the Employment Fund toward the cost of housing site development to be undertaken within the current financial year. The remaining cost would be covered by the local authority carrying out the work. According to the most recent annual return (for the year ending 31 March), the city Corporation possessed approximately 169 acres of land under the Housing of the Working Classes Acts. If the local authority wished to apply for a portion of this funding, they were required to submit proposals immediately. These were to include a layout plan showing proposed roads, sewers, and water mains, along with cost estimates. It was emphasised that the cost of these

development works would not qualify for subsidy under the Housing (Finance and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1932.

In response, Mr. Horgan asked whether the Corporation would be required to contribute half the cost. The City Manager confirmed that both the local authority and the Department would contribute £9,800 each. The Chairman remarked that, given the Corporation's current financial position and the fact that rates had already been struck for the year, it would be necessary to raise their portion of the funds through a loan.[98]

At a September 1936 meeting of Cork Corporation, Mr. D. G. Buckley proposed a motion requesting that the old Corporation buildings—specifically Madden's, Ryan's, Herman's, Roche's, the Corporation Buildings, Sutton's, Kelleher's, and Barrett's Buildings—be exempted from rates. He argued that it was unfair to demand rate payments from tenants in addition to their weekly rent, especially when those tenants would never become owners of the houses. In support of his motion, Mr. Buckley stated that rents had been increased in 1921 with the promise that they would later be reduced. Although rates had decreased between 1921 and 1936, rents had remained unchanged. He found it scandalous that tenants were paying rents ranging from 2s. 8d. to 6s. He also claimed that when the houses were built 43 years prior, the Corporation had promised that tenants would become owners after thirty years, a promise that had not been fulfilled. The Lord Mayor responded that the city Corporation lacked the authority to grant rate exemptions for these properties. Alderman Allen commented, "I hope we will have [the authority] soon."

Mr. Buckley introduced a second motion, urging that the Council request the Minister for Local Government and Public Health to empower Cork Corporation to municipalise city bus services, cinemas, and dance halls. He argued that other municipal bodies in England and Scotland owned such assets and were able to use the revenue to fund public works.

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[98] *Cork Examiner 13/8/1936*

He also cited the example of Kilkee Town Commissioners, who had taken over a dance hall to help pay the rents of unemployed residents. Alderman Desmond remarked that Cork once had a park but had sold it. The Lord Mayor questioned where the funds would come from to acquire such services. Mr. Buckley suggested that the Corporation could secure a loan. Alderman Anthony criticised the proposal, noting that Mr. Buckley had not provided any details about the capital value of the services or the source of funding, which could amount to millions. He dismissed the motion as lacking substance, calling it "the kind of tripe we hear from time to time without any commonsense behind it." Despite the criticism, Alderman Allen seconded the motion.

Mr. T. Quill stated that while the Labour Party supported municipalisation in principle, he objected to the vague and impractical nature of this particular motion. He also pointed out the inconsistency of Mr. Buckley's proposals, as he had just advocated selling houses earlier. Mr. Horgan argued that Mr. Buckley clearly had no understanding of the financial implications or value of the properties in question. Alderman Anthony mockingly moved that the motion be "put in the waste-paper basket," prompting laughter. Mr. J. M. Buckley seconded this tongue-in-cheek suggestion. When the matter was put to a vote, the motion was defeated by 11 votes to 2, with only Mr. D. G. Buckley and Alderman Allen voting in favour. The motion was thus formally rejected.[99]

An an October 1936 meeting of Cork Corporation, in the Public Works Section, Alderman Allen raised concerns about street lighting, noting that some lamps on public thoroughfares were unlit. He pointed out that parts of Sunday's Well Road had no lighting at all, and that in many of Cork's lanes, residents had no light to guide them home—prompting some laughter from the chamber. Mr. Hickey added that there had been continual complaints about inadequate lighting in areas around Collins Barracks and in the city centre. He said he believed these complaints were

[99] *Cork Examiner 24/9/1936*

well-founded and urged the City Manager to give the issue more attention.

The City Manager responded that he was allocated only a limited budget for public lighting. He stated he had no objection to installing more lights if additional funding were provided. On the matter of purchasing concrete blocks, Mr. Hickey said that suppliers who were prepared to pay reasonable wages should not be overlooked in favour of those who had no such obligations. The City Manager replied that Mr. Hickey should not attempt to pass that responsibility on to him. He explained that the Corporation was required to buy certain materials from the county and had no means of knowing the wage levels or employment conditions in those areas. That, he said, was Mr. Hickey's own responsibility. It was agreed that in future, contract conditions should include stipulations regarding wages.

Regarding the proposed sewerage scheme at Blarney Street and Gurranabraher, Mr. Connolly asked whether the Corporation had considered carrying out the works using direct labour. The City Manager explained that five or six contractors had submitted tenders. The lowest tender was not accepted for various reasons, and the Department had concurred with that decision. The South of Ireland Asphalt Company, who had submitted the second-lowest tender, were awarded the contract. This discussion had also followed correspondence from the Department, which approved the plans and specifications for the scheme and sanctioned the acceptance of the South of Ireland Asphalt Company's tender, amounting to £3,908 18s. 6d.

Dealing with the matter of Working-Class Dwellings, Alderman Allen attempted to raise an issue regarding the conduct of a rent collector towards a particular tenant. However, the Lord Mayor interjected, stating that any complaints against Corporation officials must be submitted in writing before being discussed publicly. He refused to allow Allen to proceed on the matter. Mr. D. G. Buckley then asked when the residents of Piggott's Lane would be moved into their new homes. He noted that they had been waiting for

three years and were still waiting, living in what he described as "styes." The City Manager responded that the required procedure involved a clearance order being made by the Corporation and then confirmed by the Minister for Local Government. That confirmation had only been received two weeks prior. Following that, a public notice had to be published in the press, allowing time for legal objections. If any objections were submitted, legal proceedings might follow, potentially delaying the process by another year.

Mr. Buckley highlighted the case of a woman with eight children living in a room only six feet by four-and-a-half feet in size, calling the situation atrocious. Mr. Quill remarked, "Six feet by four-and-a-half feet? That's only a coffin." Mr. Hickey inquired about the progress of housing developments on the south side of the city. The City Manager replied that delays had been caused in many cases by the inability to acquire land through private agreements, which in turn delayed obtaining the Minister's assistance. The City Engineer's report outlined progress on various public works:

- Tar spraying had been completed on the Old Youghal Road, Montenotte Park, St. Luke's Cross, Dean Street, Industrial Place, Nessan Street, and Hibernian Road. Work was ongoing on Victoria Street.
- Concreting had been completed on St. Patrick's Hill, Nicholas Church Lane, Spring Lane, and Spangle Hill.
- Good progress was reported in the painting of dwellings, markets, and public conveniences.
- The Turner's Cross storm sewer project was progressing well.
- Asphalt maintenance and dwelling repairs were ongoing, with a workforce of 22 mechanics and 90 labourers engaged across all projects.[100]

At a city council meeting in November 1936, in the Public Works section, Mr. Hurley remarked that the Corporation currently held a considerable amount of land, which, in his view, should be prepared and laid out for housing

[100] *Cork Examiner 15/10/1936*

development so it would be ready when tenders were eventually issued. Mr. Horgan inquired about the status of the Bandon Road houses, asking when they would be handed over. The Lord Mayor confirmed that they had already been transferred. Mr. T. Quill raised concerns about the condition of the dumping site on the Western Road, suggesting that it should be covered over. He also requested that the City Engineer be alerted to a hazardous quarry located behind Old Friary Lane, which posed a serious danger, particularly to children. Mr. Horgan noted that many houses across the city were being demolished, leaving derelict and unsightly sites. He proposed that new construction should take place on these plots to improve their appearance and utility. Mr. Connolly brought attention to the poor condition of a wall at St. Joseph's Cemetery. It was agreed that the matter would be referred to the appropriate authority for action.

Regarding a proposed pension for a Cork Waterworks official —20 shillings per week, pending the formal decision on his superannuation entitlement—Mr. Hurley stated that the City Manager had appeared reluctant to grant pensions or superannuation, mainly due to concerns about being surcharged. Mr. Hurley felt this situation ought to be resolved properly. In response to a question from Mr. D. Buckley, during discussion of the Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade's report, the City Manager confirmed that the ambulances were equipped with first aid apparatus and that the firemen were trained in first aid procedures.[101]

At a December 1936 meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Cork Corporation, it was reported that the Law and Finance section had outlined that the Department had consented to the acquisition of lands, along with two cottages, at Silversprings, Cork, for the sum of £3,525. This site is intended for the proposed Fever Hospital to serve Cork City and district. The report further stated that, when the purchase money becomes due, all necessary documents — including the draft conveyance — should be submitted to the Department. This submission should be accompanied by an

[101] *Cork Examiner 12/11/1936*

application for the payment of expenses from the monies held in the Sweepstake Funds by the Committee of the Cork Fever Hospital and House of Recovery. The Public Works group also reported that the City Engineer was proceeding with the development of the North-West Housing Site No. 3 by direct labour.[102]

At a city council meeting in February 1937, during discussions on the recommendations from the Public Works Section, Mr. McCarthy-Morrogh BL attempted to raise the topic of traffic in the city, referencing a recent conversation he had with the City Manager about implementing the Traffic Sub-Committee's report. However, the Lord Mayor interrupted, stating that such matters would be addressed during the rates meeting. Mr. McCarthy-Morrogh responded by insisting that traffic was relevant to public works and praised the City Manager for his helpfulness and cooperation. The discussion was then deferred.

Mr. Hickey then brought up concerns about public advertisements for Corporation haulage and cartage contracts, but he too was stopped by the Lord Mayor. At this point, Mr. O'Mahony expressed frustration and left the chamber, declaring that he would no longer participate in the proceedings. Mr. Hickey warned that unless he was allowed to speak, he would also withdraw. The Lord Mayor maintained that the issue was not on the meeting's agenda. Mr. Buckley interjected, noting that the business would already be concluded by the time the matter could be raised. Mr. Hickey pressed for clarity, asking under what heading the issue could be discussed. He later returned to the topic, specifically inquiring whether the fair wages clause had been included in the relevant contracts. The Lord Mayor replied that such a question was appropriate for a full Council meeting, not a committee session, and questioned Mr. Hickey's understanding of procedural rules. Mr. Hickey admitted that he found it difficult to grasp the procedures. The matter concluded without resolution. In another part of the meeting, the Town Clerk read a letter from the

[102] *Cork Examiner 16/12/1936*

Department of Local Government and Public Health regarding a grant to alleviate unemployment in the Cork County Borough. The letter announced a provisional grant of £26,470 for the creation of employment opportunities, with a required local contribution of £8,823. This funding was intended to support road and footpath works. Two key conditions were attached: first, that labour must be sourced through the local Employment Exchange from lists of those receiving unemployment assistance, with preference based on the order of names; second, that unskilled labour must be rotated. The Department requested that the Council submit a scheme amounting to £35,000 in total expenditure. The works selected should prioritise unskilled labour, excluding carters, to meet the goal of supporting those most in need. Mr. D.G. Buckley suggested referring the matter to the same committee that handled a similar grant previously.

Mr. Hickey asked if there had been any response to the Corporation's earlier request to the Minister concerning guaranteed minimum work periods under such schemes. The Lord Mayor stated that no reply had been received and that the issue remained unresolved. He emphasised that the current letter at hand dealt with a different matter. Mr. Hickey stressed the importance of ensuring that unemployed workers receive at least one week of employment, adding that many were preparing to oppose any scheme that only offered three days' work. The Lord Mayor responded by affirming that all members of the Council shared the same concern and were equally committed to securing fair work conditions. The letter was then passed on to the City Manager for further action.[103]

During Dáil proceedings in March 1937, Mr. W. Norton, of Labour, asked the Minister for Local Government and Public Health whether he had received representations from the Cork Corporation requesting the introduction of legislation to enable the Corporation to pay pensions to its workmen, and whether he proposed to introduce such legislation. The

[103] *Evening Echo 10/2/1937*

Minister, Mr. Seán T. O'Kelly, of Fianna Fáil, replied that the answer to both parts of the question was in the affirmative.[104]

In June 1937, at a city council meeting, the City Engineer reported on the progress of various works across the city. At the North City Site No. 1, the installation of sewers and water mains, along with the grading and concreting of roads, was nearly complete. At Baker's Lane, preliminary work for laying sewers and roads was well underway. Several streets—namely John Redmond Street, Mulgrave Road, Exchange Street, Shandon Street, and Ashburton Square—had been tar-sprayed. Additionally, the preparatory work for converting premises at the Corporation Yard into a new Weights and Measures Office had been completed. Improvements were also made to the footpaths at Anglesea Street. Meanwhile, various asphalt repairs and housing maintenance works were attended to. A total of 24 mechanics and 103 labourers were employed across all these projects.[105]

At a convening of Cork Corporation in August 1937, the Council recommended the resolution by Mr. D. G. Buckley to the City Manager, to the effect that the city council consider culverting a portion of the South Channel to create space for car parking and other uses, with funding to be sought from the Department of Public Works as a relief grant for the unemployed of Cork City.[106]

In October 1937, at a city council meeting, the opinion was expressed that considerable effort had been made to ensure these areas were properly lit. However, the issue of litter being thrown on the streets had become a serious nuisance. Many individuals in the city were responsible for this behaviour, which was growing increasingly disgraceful. On one occasion, a man was observed throwing refuse into the street during daylight hours. It was evident that no effective measures had been taken to control this problem. The Lord

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[104] *Cork Examiner 11/3/1937*

[105] *Evening Echo 9/6/1937*

[106] *Cork Examiner 25/8/1937*

Mayor agreed with Alderman Daly, who had raised the issue multiple times. It was believed that it would be beneficial for the Lord Mayor to appeal to the citizens and involve school authorities to educate children about the importance of cleanliness. Alderman Daly also wished to draw attention to the disgraceful condition of the river channels and weirs. He proposed that the City Engineer be asked to report on the state of the weirs, many of which were noted to be neglected. Mr. D. G. Buckley seconded the motion, which was approved. The Lord Mayor observed that there was a significant lack of civic responsibility among some residents regarding the dumping of rubbish in the streets. He had addressed the issue repeatedly and suggested that when the Engineer discussed the condition of the weirs with the City Manager, the problem of street litter should also be mentioned. The Lord Mayor concurred with Mr. Horgan that there was ample reason for complaint about rubbish being dumped on the streets. Mr. Quill noted that the previous year's budget had reduced the funds allocated for street cleaning and urged members to bear the current situation in mind when considering next year's estimates.

Mr. McCarthy-Morrogh brought to attention a tender from Messrs Mather and Platt, Ltd., Manchester, which had been accepted for the supply of motors, starters, and ammeters required for the proposed electrification of the filter plant at the Lee Road Waterworks. The contract was priced at £418, duty extra. He remarked that since this was a public work and not a protected industry, an application should be made to the relevant Department for a permit. Alderman Daly responded that the City Manager had previously applied for permits but had been refused. Mr. Horgan suggested that a request be sent to the local T.Ds, urging them to raise the matter with the Government to allow duty-free import of goods not manufactured in Ireland, as the duty placed a handicap on industry. Alderman Anthony explained that the Deputies frequently made such applications, but the Government's policy was firm and could not be influenced. The City Engineer mentioned that the duty amounted to

£41 16s. It was resolved to instruct the City Manager to apply for a refund of the duty.[107]

During early March of 1938, at a meeting of the Cork Harbour Board, strong criticisms were voiced regarding the rotational system of employment applied under Government relief schemes. The discussion was prompted by a letter from the Office of Public Works, circulated among the members. The letter, issued on behalf of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, referenced recent concreting works completed by the Harbour Commissioners with financial assistance from the Employment Schemes Vote. These works included: Penrose Quay, Cork (estimated cost £460); Custom House Quay, Cork (£278 10s); and Deep Water Quay, Cobh (£290). The letter noted that these projects served as useful case studies to compare the cost and quality of work conducted under the rotational employment system, with that done through regular full-time methods by local authorities. The following key points were outlined:

- The work had been executed using labour recruited from the unemployment assistance register, strictly adhering to Government guidelines on employment under relief schemes.
- The projects were completed efficiently, with certifications from both the Harbour Board's engineer and a technical officer from the Department confirming that the work had been properly and professionally carried out.
- The original cost estimates, prepared by the Commissioners' engineer, had assumed standard working conditions without traffic or shipping-related disruptions. Any cost overruns, such as those on the Penrose and Deep Water Quays, were attributed to unforeseen interference from traffic and shipping needs—not the quality of the workers or the rotational system itself.
- At Custom House Quay, where such interferences were absent, the final cost was actually less than estimated.

[107] *Cork Examiner 13/10/1937*

Based on the certified reports and costing records, the Cork Harbour Commissioners were officially recognised as an authority capable of executing employment works in compliance with Government standards, delivering both technically and financially sound results. The Parliamentary Secretary himself had visited the sites during construction and expressed high regard for the organisation and supervision, the commitment of the workforce, and the quality of the finished work.

Despite this, several Board members voiced strong opposition to the rotational employment system. Mr. Barry (a Harbour Commissioner), speaking on behalf of the Labour Party, criticised the letter as self-congratulatory and stated that he could not accept the idea that the rotational system matched full-time employment in effectiveness. He clarified that their opposition was not to rotational work per se—such as one week's employment per worker—but to the inconsistent system of swapping and sharing limited days among many, which he described as inefficient and degrading. He also objected to the Harbour Board being drawn into aiding schemes designed, in his view, more to bolster Government image than to truly serve the unemployed. He referred specifically to a proposed improvement project at the Blackrock end of the Marina, questioning why the Board should support it merely to assist Mr. Hugo Flinn and lend their staff and administration to another rotational initiative.

While he acknowledged that some schemes may succeed, he argued that such success was due entirely to the Harbour Board's own competent oversight. He reaffirmed his party's opposition to any future schemes imposed on the Board and remained unconvinced that a four-day rotational system was a viable solution. Alderman Anthony, T.D., also spoke strongly against the rotational model, particularly its failure to guarantee workers a full week or fortnight of employment. He described the current situation as increasingly difficult, with public bodies pressured to accept schemes or risk being accused of depriving the unemployed of opportunities. He cited a past example when Cork Corporation delayed approving a scheme until fairer employment terms were

ensured—only to be publicly criticised. Ald. Anthony concluded that, despite personal objections, public bodies were forced to accept such flawed schemes due to political pressure, describing it as a "bitter pill" that had to be swallowed.[108]

Also in March 1938, during a city council meeting, speaking under the Public Works section, Mr. McCarthy-Morrogh referred to the ongoing improvement works on the city streets. He asked the City Manager about the likelihood that the new 12-inch main laid in Winthrop Street would prevent the flooding that had previously caused the wood-paving blocks in the street to become displaced. The City Manager responded that the replacement of the wood blocks in Winthrop Street had been carried out specifically to prevent disruptions caused by flooding. It was expected that the newly laid street surface would remain intact and undisturbed. In response to a further question from Mr. McCarthy-Morrogh regarding the disposal of the old asphalt, the City Manager explained that the quantity of waste asphalt produced was so large that it held no commercial value. As a result, it had to be disposed of in the most practical way possible, such as filling in holes or through other means of removal.[109]

At an April 1938 meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Cork Corporation, the Public Works minutes recorded that it had been decided to complete the City Hall surround at an estimated cost of £120. It was also decided that, effective from 31st March, the daily wages of Corporation labourers and members of the Fire Brigade would be increased by 10d.[110]

At a meeting of the Cork Harbour Board in June 1938, the minutes of the Dredge and Works Committee included several pressing matters, such as the consideration of a letter from the Office of Public Works regarding proposed

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[108] *Evening Echo 9/3/1938*

[109] *Evening Echo 9/3/1938*

[110] *Cork Examiner 13/4/1938*

improvements to the lower end of the Marina was deferred for one week. Furthermore, a letter was read from Messrs. T. J. Moran and Co., Ltd., Dublin, stating that they had received instructions from the Board of Works to proceed with the laying of a second six-inch main parallel to, and in close proximity to, the existing main to Haulbowline Island. As the proposed work might impact navigation at certain times, the firm requested to be informed of any special instructions the Commissioners might wish to issue, so that the operations could proceed with minimal interference to the Commissioners' interests. After reviewing a report from the Law Agent, the Committee—on the motion of Mr. Horne, seconded by Councillor O'Mahony—recommended that Messrs. Moran and Co., Ltd. be informed that the Harbour Master would offer as much facilitation as possible, consistent with the needs of navigation. However, the Commissioners would insist that the work be carried out in a manner that impeded navigation as little as possible.[111]

In July 1938, During a Dáil debate, Mr. J. Hickey, Lord Mayor of Cork, and Mr. Brooke Brasier raised the issue of establishing a civil aerodrome in Cork. In response, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Mr. Seán Lemass, expressed his support for the project and encouraged Cork Corporation to generate local interest. However, he explained that he could not confirm the extent of Government assistance until the projected costs were clarified. When Mr. Brasier suggested an estimated cost of £30,000, Minister Mr. Lemass remarked that such a figure would not warrant much interest from him, implying that a more substantial investment would be required.

Mr. Lemass was presenting a motion in the Dáil for a grant of £11,116 to complete the necessary funding for transport and meteorological services. He informed the Dáil that the Government was currently constructing two civil airports—one at Dublin and the other on the Shannon. While most funding was provided through the Department of Public Works, an allocation of £10,100 was included in the current

[111] *Cork Examiner 23/6/1938*

estimate for associated purposes. Previously, the Minister had provided a preliminary estimate for these airport projects. The total cost of the land-based aerodrome at Shannon was estimated at £535,000. A revised decision had been made to proceed with a partial development of a flying boat base at Shannon, budgeted at £270,000. This brought the total estimated capital cost for the Shannon Airport scheme to £805,000. The Dublin airport, by comparison, was estimated to cost £360,000. A subhead within the budget also covered the acquisition of land for both airports. Additionally, provisions were made for the staffing requirements related to experimental flights from both Dublin and Shannon, with £1,000 allocated to cover initial personnel costs. The Minister also addressed developments in the national meteorological service. This service, newly transferred to the Department of Industry and Commerce in 1936 (previously under the Department of Education), was currently operating from Shannon under the supervision of the Meteorological Office in London. At that time, trained Irish personnel had yet to be appointed. The existing infrastructure included a central headquarters at Shannon, five telegraphic reporting stations, and several rainfall observation posts.

During the session, Councillor J. Hickey TD (Labour, Cork) enquired whether any provision had been made for an airport in Cork. The Minister replied that the initiative appeared to be led by Cork Corporation, and while Government financial support was a consideration, the matter remained in abeyance. He reiterated his strong desire to see a civil airport in Cork and welcomed any efforts by the Corporation to revitalise the proposal. Mr. Brooke Brasier TD (Fine Gael, Cork S.E.) noted that three public bodies—the Cork Corporation, Cork County Council, and the Harbour Board—had demonstrated interest in the project. He pointed out that an ideal site near Midleton had been chosen from among ten proposed locations. Mr. Brasier asked the Minister to clarify the anticipated level of Government contribution, noting his understanding that the State would cover 50% of the cost. The remaining 50% would be divided among the three public bodies, with the Corporation—

expected to benefit most—likely contributing the largest share. He also expressed confidence that Cork County Council and the Cork Harbour Board would support the initiative financially.[112]

In March 1939, in a Dáil debate, Mr. J. Hurley TD (Labour, Cork SE) referred to the significant hardship being imposed on city workers on public relief schemes who, due to one of the Cork Corporation's housing schemes, were relocated only slightly outside of the city boundary, and consequently found themselves subject to the lower unemployment assistance rate applicable to the county.[113]

During a July 1939 city council meeting, under the approval of the Public Works Committee, the report of the City Engineer was adopted, recommending that the concrete outside Sullivan's Quay School be covered with paving, except for one area which was to be surfaced with mastic asphalt. A discussion ensued regarding the relative merits of contract versus direct labour for the painting of 170 houses—specifically, 54 at Commons Road, 30 at Gurranabraher, and 86 at Greenmount. The estimated total cost of this work was approximately £1,086. Alderman Allen argued that, rather than outsourcing the work to contractors, the Corporation should be able to carry it out more efficiently and economically through direct labour, under the supervision of its own staff.

In response to a query from Mr. O'Driscoll, the City Manager expressed the view that contractors were likely to be in a better position to complete the work at a lower cost than could be achieved by the city Corporation using its own resources. There was, however, a divergence of opinion on the matter of quality. Some members believed that contract work might be inferior to work done by direct labour, while others held the opposite view. Mr. Connolly noted that pointing (i.e. the finishing of joints in brickwork or masonry)

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[112] *Cork Examiner 9/7/1938*

[113] *Cork Examiner 30/3/1939*

had significant implications for subsequent repairs, and maintained that, as the largest property owner in the city, the Corporation should give this matter careful consideration.[114]

During a meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Cork Corporation in August 1939, the minutes of the Public Works Committee, as read, included a report from the Assistant City Engineer. This had detailed that work carried out on the various unemployment relief schemes had been progressing satisfactorily during the past month. Under Relief Grant No. 927, a total of 5,176 square yards of concrete slabs had been laid on roads at River Lane, Silversprings, Strawberry Hill, Chapel Street, Barrack View, School Lane, Philpott's Lane, Wolfe Tone Street, North Abbey Street, Tower Street, Reed's Square, Windmill Road, and the Back Watercourse. The average number of men employed per week was 197, and the approximate expenditure to date amounted to £23,900. Work at the hatcheries were making steady progress. The laying of footpaths by the South of Ireland Asphalt Company at Spangle Hill had also been completed, except for a section adjacent to the shop sites.[115]

At a September 1939 meeting of Cork Corporation's General Purposes Committee, on the topic of city planning, Mr. T. Quill enquired of the City Manager as to their existing position. He understood that, five months previously, it had been agreed that their town-planning expert should travel to Cork and consult with the Housing Committee, and he wished to know what arrangements had since been made in that regard. The City Manager responded that it had generally been agreed the expert's attendance would not be particularly useful until such time as he had had the opportunity to consider the matter of the plans in more detail. Mr. O'Mahony stated his understanding that the expert in question was an official of the Board of Works. The City Manager confirmed that, at the time of his own

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[114] *Evening Echo 12/7/1939*

[115] *Evening Echo 9/8/1939*

appointment, he had disclosed all relevant details concerning his employment. He asserted that, prior to the sanctioning of his appointment, all pertinent documents had been sent to the Board of Works, and it would be quite astonishing if they had not been. He assured the committee that the Board of Public Works had been fully aware of his acceptance of the post. It was agreed that the Corporation should write to the town-planning expert to ascertain what progress he had made with the Town Planning Scheme for the city.[116]

In October 1939, a committee of the Cork Corporation had under consideration a communication from the Department of Local Government—circulated to all other public bodies—notifying that the rate of interest on issues from the Local Loans Fund would be charged at 5½ per cent per annum as from 12th September, irrespective of the purpose of the loan and whether it had been authorised by the Minister before or after that date. The reasons behind the order were not officially communicated, but the '*Cork Examiner*' outlined that it was assumed that one such reason was the anticipated difficulty of obtaining cheap money during the course of the war and possibly for some time thereafter. Local authorities, it asserted, could scarcely expect to receive funding for housing or other purposes from the Local Loans Fund at a rate lower than that at which the Fund itself could raise capital. Furthermore, repayment via a sinking fund also had to be taken into account. Naturally, the paper asserted, progressive city corporations and the smaller town councils would feel disappointed, as the new interest charges were likely to hinder building schemes. However, it was feared that if the interest and repayment charges were not increased, public bodies would in any case experience difficulty in continuing with house building and other public works.[117]

At a city council meeting held in November 1939, the Public Works Committee minutes contained the following: A report was submitted by the City Engineer concerning a claim from

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[116] *Cork Examiner 14/9/1939*

[117] *Cork Examiner 12/10/1939*

the Committee of Management of the South Charitable Infirmary. The claim sought payment of £177 8s. 10d., representing the Cork Corporation's proportion of the cost of repairs to the permanent buildings of the institution for the half-year ending 30th June for the previous year. It was directed that a sum of £92 3s. 5d. be allowed on account of the claim.[118]

[118] *Cork Examiner 16/11/1939*

BUILDING A NEW CITY

The city engaged in unemployment relief schemes through building social housing, tarring roads, and setting down infrastructure such as footpaths and street-lighting.

WORKS IN WARTIME, 1940-1945

At a February 1940 meeting of the Cork Corporation, the Lord Mayor, Councillor J. Hickey, T.D., presided. A circular letter was read from the Association of Municipal Authorities forwarding for adoption a resolution which requested that the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Finance abolish the sums payable to the Commissioners for Public Works on account of old loans. This was because the Minister for Finance had stated that the sum formerly due to the British Government under this heading had been written off and was no longer payable. Therefore, each local authority should have been relieved of this payment. The resolution was adopted, and the City Manager remarked that to adopt the resolution and to have it implemented would not have been of much financial benefit to the Cork Corporation. The benefit arising from the cancellation of this payment would have applied only to those public bodies which had borrowed from the British Public Works Commissioners in years gone by.

A letter was read from the Cork Industrial Development Association drawing attention to the unsuitability of the waiting premises provided by the C.I.E. (Omnibus) Company in the city and urging the Corporation to call on the company to provide a much better and more suitable accommodation in this regard. Mr. Quill said that there had definitely been a great need to do something with those premises. It was agreed to ask C.I.E. for a definite answer regarding the acquiring of a new site as a bus terminus in the city.[119]

By the end of February, the City Manager presented a modified air raid precaution scheme that had been submitted last October and discussed thoroughly with representatives from the Department of Defence. As a result of these discussions, the requirements of the various services were adjusted, reducing the total estimated cost from £107,490 to approximately £59,300. The allocation for air raid shelters

[119] *Cork Examiner 22/2/1940*

alone was cut from £89,450 to £45,000. The current estimate for approval included air raid shelters at £40,180; a decontamination and rescue depot for £640; two district decontamination depots costing £1,760; protection for City Hall at £600; warning sirens at £700; seven first aid posts for £1,050; message centres at £130; two auxiliary fire stations costing £1,800; an extension to the chief fire station for £2,000; a turntable machine for £4,000; and equipment for first aid posts and gas treatment at £1,500, bringing the total to £59,360.

Alderman Anthony expressed his view that the scheme should not be finally adopted that night and suggested protesting against the extraordinary expenditure on air raid precautions, proposing that it be postponed for a further week. The Lord Mayor responded that the postponement could be indefinite. Alderman Allen inquired about the cost to ratepayers, to which the Lord Mayor replied that the Government would cover 70 per cent of the cost and the remainder would fall on the rates, amounting to about 2 shillings in the pound. Alderman Allen accepted that the ratepayers would bear that cost.

The Lord Mayor then recommended postponing the scheme indefinitely. When Mr. Jeremiah Buckley asked if such action might cause difficulties for the Corporation, the Lord Mayor reassured that they were as interested in protecting themselves as anyone else. Mr. Quill remarked that dealing with air raid precautions should be the responsibility of the Department of Defence and expressed concern that a proposal of £45,000 for shelters should not be allowed to pass without comment. The Lord Mayor stated that since the matter was being postponed indefinitely, further discussion was pointless. Mr. Quill added that their time should not be wasted with such reports, including proposals for shelters in Cork and even under the riverbed.

On the question of underground shelters, the Lord Mayor noted that they could not go underground due to water issues in Cork, meaning shelters would have to be overground. The decision was made to adjourn the matter indefinitely.

Alderman Anthony agreed that it should be postponed until the Corporation was capable of proceeding, with the Lord Mayor affirming this stance.[120]

At a March 1940 meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Cork Corporation, with Mr. T. Quill (Deputy Lord Mayor) presiding, arising out of a report from the City Engineer to the Public Works Committee on work carried out on relief schemes, Mr D. G. Buckley drew attention to the fact that the road around Leitrim Street was being dug up, and he considered it most unfair that a road like that, with five inches of concrete, should have been dug up simply for the sake of digging. He remarked that they ought to stop spending money in such a manner. The City Manager replied that they had been endeavouring to have the funds available for unemployment schemes diverted from roads, and had succeeded, though not entirely, up to that point. He expressed hope that they would have greater success in that direction in the future. He stated that it was untrue to say the road had been laid only the previous year. Under the heading "Working-Class Dwellings", there was an item stating that the Department of Local Government and Public Health had approved the revised layout plan and details of the sewer and road sections of the scheme for 210 houses at Greenmount.[121]

At the same meeting, a major update also appeared under the heading "Public Works" in the City Manager's departmental reports. A letter was received from the Department of Local Government and Public Health, stating that a sum of £8,800 had been provisionally allocated to the Cork County Borough out of the Road Improvement Grant, 1941–42, for main road improvement as follows:

(a) Kyrl's Quay and Bachelor's Quay (Lavitt's Quay and Granville Quay) — £2,400

[120] *Evening Echo 28/2/1940*

[121] *Cork Examiner 14/3/1940*

(b) Pope's Quay (Camden Quay and Mulgrave Road) — £2,300
(c) Capwell Road — £2,500
(d) North Main Street (Washington Street and North Gate Bridge) — £1,500
(e) Daunt's Square — £400
(f) Castle Street (North Main Street and Daunt's Square) — £300

It was directed that the sanction of the Minister be requested for the omission of Item (a) on the above list, and for the substitution thereof of the cost of erecting signs in connection with the enforcement of traffic bye-laws.[122]

In April 1940, at a special meeting of Cork Corporation, the Council considered the following recommendation of the Committee of the whole Council that the Corporation would acquire from St. Anthony's Utility Society, subject to the sanction of the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, the plot of ground and houses built and in the course of construction at Assumption Road, together with the benefit of the contract entered into between the Utility Society and Messrs. Coughlan Brothers. To that end, it was recommended that the sum of £35,000 be borrowed and expended as follows:

(a) £1,050 to purchase from the Society the plot of ground held from Miss B. Barry under lease dated 9th November 1938, for 500 years at a yearly rent of £175. Of this, £300 was to be paid directly to the Society and £750 was to be paid, at the Society's direction, to its depositors.
(b) £3,510 to refund grants to which a public utility society had been entitled, but which could not be paid to the Corporation.
(c) £15,750 to repay the Office of Public Works, being the amount of their mortgage on the premises.
(d) £16,600 (approximately) for payments due to the contractors for completion of the building contract.
(e) £3,000 (approximately) for the development of the site.

[122] *Cork Examiner 13/3/1940*

(f) £1,200 for legal and miscellaneous expenses.

It was further recommended that authority be granted to the City Manager to borrow the said sum of £35,000. In support of the recommendation, the City Manager submitted a report to clarify the financial arrangements, noting that some members of the Corporation had expressed difficulty reconciling the total amount to be borrowed with the actual payments involved. The breakdown was as follows:

Total outlay:

- Deposits and purchase price: £1,050
- Repayment of grants: £3,510
- Due to the Commissioners of Public Works: £15,750
- Balance of building contract: £16,600
- Development of site: £3,000
- Architects' fees, legal, and other costs: £1,290

Total: £41,200

Less amounts receivable by the Corporation:

- Un-advanced mortgage balance: £5,150
- Grants repayable to the Corporation: £1,170

Total receipts: £6,320

Net expenditure therefore amounted to: £41,200 – £6,320 = £34,880, rounded in the borrowing resolution to £35,000.

Mr. C. Connolly then proposed the adoption of the recommendation, stating that the proposal had been thoroughly considered and represented a good bargain for the Corporation. It would not only provide 70 additional houses but would also create employment in the building sector. Alderman J. Allen seconded the motion.[123]

During a city council meeting in July 1940, the Public Works recommendations contained the strong assertion that the

[123] *Cork Examiner 11/4/1940*

Department of Local Government and Public Health raised no objection to the substitution of the undermentioned works, estimated to cost £1,785, for works previously proposed to be carried out under the Road Improvement Grant 1939–40, and stated that as the total sum available was £2,400, proposals for the expenditure of the balance should be submitted:

(a) Provision of pedestrian crossings (metal stud lines)
(b) Traffic signs (except those relating to bus stops)

It was directed that the City Engineer prepare, for submission to the Department of Local Government and Public Health, an estimate of the cost of erecting such number as might be necessary of long-distance direction signs indicating routes through the city to Dublin, Waterford, Fermoy, Mallow, Blarney, Limerick, Killarney, Kinsale, etc., together with an estimate of the cost of erecting danger signs at certain places. It was also directed that tenders be invited for the development of the Assumption Road social housing site. Regarding the conversion of a Merryweather fire engine from an open to a fully enclosed type of body and the acceptance of a tender of £450 for the performance of the work, the City Manager explained that the work was being undertaken to protect members of the brigade travelling to fires in bad weather. Mr. Horgan remarked: "Quite right."

Further consideration of the matter of the proposed Cork City–Crosshaven Road was adjourned. The City Manager stated that the estimated cost was about £40,000, and that the Cork County Council was also anxious to know whether the city Corporation would bear a proportion of the cost. Mr. Horgan remarked that perhaps they could give a proportion of their unemployment grants, provided some city men were engaged on the works.[124]

During late July, at an additional city council meeting, Alderman Anthony, reverting to the matter of proposed air raid shelters, remarked that some form of shelter should

[124] *Evening Echo 10/7/1940*

indeed be provided for the public. He noted that he had seen a leaflet earlier that afternoon which stated that a shelter could be purchased for £12 or £14—but, he questioned, how many people could actually afford that amount? He expressed astonishment that, despite the country's resources, and the large numbers of unemployed, more had not been done to put people to work constructing shelters. He believed this could be an effective way of employing thousands and suggested that representations should be made to the Government on the matter. It was then decided that the City Manager should make contact with the Minister for Defence regarding the necessity of providing shelters in the city. In response to a question from Mr Morgan, the City Manager stated that the Corporation had previously declined to allocate funding for the shelters—but, of course, the situation had since changed.[125]

In September 1940, at another city council meeting (with Mr W. Desmond, Lord Mayor, in the chair), correspondence from Messrs W. T. Cosgrave, T.D., T. P. Dowdall, T.D., and J. Hurley, T.D., was read concerning the Third Employment Period Order, 1940, which affected persons residing just outside the city boundary. In reply to Mr Cosgrave's representations, the Office of Public Works sent a communication suggesting that pending legislation would include provision enabling the Corporation to apply for an order to extend the borough boundary. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs wrote expressing regret that, owing to the current emergency and the consequent heavy demands on the Department's engineering branch, it was not possible at that time to consider the question of providing additional public telephone facilities for Cork City. The matter was listed for future consideration when circumstances permitted.

A report from the City Manager stated that the authority of the Corporation was requested for the borrowing, by way of temporary overdraft, of the sum of £46,000 on the Housing Capital Account, for the purpose of discharging all claims—including contractors' retention money—on houses at

[125] *Cork Examiner 24/7/1940*

Baker's Lane and Spangle Hill. Of the money already borrowed for housing purposes generally, the sum of £35,900 remained invested and could not at that time have been advantageously realised. It was, therefore, necessary, he asserted to raise this money by other means than through the sale of investments. Following some discussion regarding the advisability of disposing of at least a portion of the stock held, it was agreed—on the motion of Mr O'Driscoll, seconded by Mr J. M. Buckley—that the City Manager be given authority to borrow the stipulated amount, and that he give consideration to the disposal of a certain percentage of the stocks in hand.

Mr D. G. Buckley proposed a motion requesting that the Minister for Local Government and Public Health grant the Council the power to reduce the rents of Corporation dwellings—powers which were at that time vested in the City Manager. Alderman Anthony argued that this was a matter for the Legislature, as under the governing Act, rent-fixing was one of the reserved functions of the City Manager. If it had never been included in the Act, he added, he would move an amendment to the resolution, since, as a member of the Corporation, he did not relish the idea of shouldering the responsibility of setting rents. He warned that there would be a clamour to obtain houses at 7s. or 8s. per week, and once tenants had secured them, they would then demand rent reductions. Aspirants to Corporation membership might even promise rent-free housing. He moved a direct negative. Mr O'Driscoll seconded the amendment. It was passed.

In accordance with notice of motion, Mr Quill proposed that, bearing in mind the perceived undue hardship caused to many tenants of Corporation houses as a result of the excessive rents by then being charged, and further, in view of the fact that the Council had made provision in that year's estimates for the sum of £8,000 to go towards the reduction of such rents, that the Council would consequently instruct the City Manager to immediately reduce those rents and report to the next meeting of the Council on the particulars of the reductions implemented.

Mr Quill having spoken to the motion, the City Manager, in reply, stated that it was within the knowledge of every member of the city Corporation—pursuant to a statement made by the Medical Officer of Health and circulated to members—that of 1,100 houses, no fewer than 952 were let at 10s. a week or less. There were no fewer than 466 houses, with three bedrooms and a bathroom, let at 5s. a week or less. Additionally, 250 houses were let at 3s. 6d. a week or less, and these included three bedrooms, a living room, and a scullery. Corporation tenants had included 104 families with means exceeding £4 per week and 400 tenants with incomes over £3 per week. Only 214 tenants, he noted, had incomes under 20s. per week, and 400 tenants had incomes under 30s. per week. Therefore, he argued, rents fixed as they were could not reasonably be described as onerous.

He acknowledged that there might be particular cases where the rules and regulations under which rents were originally fixed no longer matched the tenant's circumstances due to changes over time. However, he added, those rents remained fixed regardless of any change in tenant circumstances. That was not the fault of the City Manager but was inherent in the regulations governing the letting of certain categories of housing. If rent was fixed, it remained so irrespective of any future hardship, which was a characteristic of the landlord-tenant system that could not be changed unilaterally. After further discussion, the motion was declared passed.[126]

Also in September, the City Manager stated that he had made a report some time previously to the Corporation, estimating the cost of the air raid precautions (A.R.P.) scheme for the city at just over £59,000. At that time, the Corporation did not consider the scheme necessary and postponed its consideration. At its July meeting, however, the Corporation had directed him to write to the Minister for Defence to enquire whether he considered the preparation of such a scheme urgently necessary and, if so, whether he would be prepared to make a larger grant towards its cost. The letter just read to the members was the reply to that

[126] *Evening Echo 25/9/1940*

enquiry. In discussions with officers from the Department of Defence, the City Manager continued, it had been suggested that the provision for air raid shelters in the original scheme could be significantly reduced. The estimate submitted in January had provided for shelters costing £45,000, which would accommodate approximately 15,000 people. The Corporation had since suggested that the scheme should only provide accommodation for around 5,000 people. This, he explained, would reduce the shelter cost from £45,000 to approximately £20,000, bringing the total estimated cost of the overall scheme down from £69,000 to about £34,000.

Mr Hickey asked, "And do I understand that 60 per cent of that will come from the State?" The City Manager confirmed this was the case. Mr McCarthy-Morrogh remarked that people generally did not appear to fully understand that air raid shelters were in no way proof against direct hits from bombs. If a shelter took a direct hit, everyone inside would likely be killed, just as they would be in a house struck by a bomb. He explained that air raid shelters provided safety primarily against flying glass, falling walls, and similar hazards. Shelters, he said, were especially important for people living in houses with dilapidated, crumbling walls that might collapse if a bomb landed nearby. However, it was vital people abandoned the notion that shelters offered absolute security. He recommended an investigation by the Department into how many houses, and in which areas of the city, were in such poor condition that they would be at risk of collapse from a nearby explosion.

Mr O'Driscoll stated that, not being an engineer, he had little knowledge of bombs, but he believed the Corporation should concentrate on the second paragraph of the Department of Defence's letter. He urged immediate action to educate the public on what they should do in the event of an air raid. Given the risks under such conditions, he felt public instruction was essential—whether people chose to remain in their homes or not.

Mr Quill commented that the Corporation would be acting effectively if it resolved to demolish dangerously unsafe

buildings within the city. Considering that the current proposal limited shelter capacity to 5,000 people, he suggested forming a small committee from the full Council to examine the matter in detail and consult with military authorities. Alderman Anthony added that it would be reassuring for ordinary citizens to know that precautionary steps were being taken. He warned, however, that referring the matter to a committee might result in delays, causing the scheme to drift. Moreover, undertaking the work would provide employment opportunities for the unemployed in digging foundations and constructing shelters.

The City Manager stated that under the scheme, air raid shelters would need to be erected in the city centre—in streets such as Patrick Street, the Grand Parade, and South Mall—where large numbers of people would be away from their homes and in need of immediate shelter. Additional shelters would also be required in areas like Sheares Street and Henry Street to serve the Marsh area, and at the junction of Kyrl's Quay and Cornmarket Street. Mr Hickey seconded Mr Quill's proposal to appoint a small committee. Mr Jeremiah Buckley proposed that the Council accept the recommendations in the Department's letter. He believed appointing a committee was unnecessary, describing the matter as essentially military in nature. He suggested the Council simply grant the City Manager authority to consult with military authorities and proceed with the scheme. Mr Hickey pointed out that the proposal was redundant, as no one had objected to the City Manager proceeding with the scheme. Eventually, it was agreed that a small committee be appointed to move the matter forward.[127]

During October 1940, at a special meeting of the Cork Corporation, a report from a special committee was unanimously adopted, recommending that the Corporation prepare an air raid precautions scheme for the city. The Lord Mayor modified the report slightly by suggesting that the air raid shelters to be constructed should be lit. Additionally, by a

[127] *Cork Examiner 25/9/1940*

majority vote, the Council recommended that the work be carried out by direct labour rather than through contracts.

The committee's report explained that they had considered a letter from the Department of Defence dated the 18th of the previous month, which urged the Corporation to prepare an air raid precautions scheme and referred the matter to the meeting on the 24th. They were convinced that the Air Raid Precautions Act of 1939 required the Corporation to prepare such a scheme, and noted that Section 29 of the Act allowed the Minister to dissolve the Corporation if it failed to fulfil this duty. Given this, they felt obliged to recommend the Corporation proceed with the scheme. The report outlined that an air raid precautions scheme would include public air raid shelters, instruction for the general public, casualty treatment provisions, additional fire-fighting services, and a special demolition and rescue service to handle damage caused by explosives. The construction of shelters was seen as feasible, and the committee recommended authorising an expenditure of £20,000 for the construction of unlit shelters in crowded business districts where, according to the City Engineer, houses were structurally unsafe and likely to collapse if near an explosion. They further advised that no shelters should be built in Patrick Street. The City Engineer was also directed to propose the establishment of first-aid posts and depots, auxiliary fire stations and depots, a decontamination centre, a warning siren system, and a message centre and control headquarters at the City Hall.

The city was recommended to be divided into four areas for air raid precaution work: the North-west, bounded by the North Channel and west of a line through Bridge Street and St. Patrick's Hill; the North-east, similarly bounded but east of that line; the South-west, bounded by the North Channel and west of a line through South Gate Bridge, Barrack Street, Friar's Street and Friar's Walk; and the South-east, bounded east of that same line. They suggested appointing a voluntary chief air warden for the city and area wardens for each section to assist him. Once appointed, an appeal would be made for 600 volunteer air wardens, 500 first-aid workers,

and 200 auxiliary fire service volunteers, with training and equipment provided.

Mr. D. G. Buckley proposed, and Mr. J. M. Buckley seconded, the adoption of the report, which was then unanimously passed. Alderman J. Allen appealed to large local employers to provide shelters for their employees, arguing it was not primarily the Corporation's duty to do so. Following discussion, it was agreed that the air raid shelters should be lit, and this was formally adopted as a city council recommendation.[128]

Additionally during October, at a meeting of the Cork Branch of the Federation of Builders, Contractors and Allied Employers of Ireland, it was resolved to release a statement to the press, to the effect that the majority decision by Cork Corporation to build air raid shelters using direct labour was causing concern both among the general public and especially within the building trade. It had been clearly demonstrated on many occasions that in Cork, as in other places, employing direct labour tended to be more expensive than hiring specialist contractors who had the right equipment and expertise for the job. This approach lead, in their view, to a false economy, and it could not be argued that workers benefitted more than they would if hired through regular contractors. It was crucial, they asserted that the shelters ought to be constructed as quickly and as cheaply as possible. Cork's contractors, they said, made a significant contribution to the city's revenue, and they strongly objected to the city Corporation's proposed plan, which would deprive them of what they saw as their rightful and proper business opportunities.[129]

In November 1940, at a city council meeting, proposed the topic of Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) scheme for Cork City was again discussed, which was presided over by the Lord Mayor (Alderman W. Desmond). The discussion arose from

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[128] *Cork Examiner 9/10/1940*

[129] *Cork Examiner 15/10/1940*

recommendations contained in the minutes of the Public Works Section, which were as follows:

- That the City Engineer prepare plans and specifications for air raid shelters and select sites for their erection in crowded business centres and in districts where, in his opinion, the houses were so structurally decayed as to be incapable of being strengthened to provide adequate protection for the inhabitants during air raids.
- That the same officer prepare plans for the erection of warning sirens for the city and suburbs, along with an estimate of the cost of purchasing and installing the equipment.
- That the same officer submit proposals and a cost estimate for establishing a decontamination depot to serve the city and suburbs.

Other recommendations included the establishment of first aid depots, first aid posts, a message centre, and a control headquarters at City Hall. Provision was also made for the establishment of auxiliary fire stations and fire depots. Mr Jerh. Buckley expressed the hope that the air raid shelters would, where possible, be constructed underground. It had now been proven beyond doubt, he said, that above-ground shelters were practically useless except as protection against shrapnel. The Lord Mayor responded that such an approach was generally understood and would be implemented where feasible. Mr C. Connolly inquired, "When will the scheme be proceeded with?"

The City Manager noted that several complex issues remained unresolved. There was the difficulty of siting the shelters. A decision had to be made on whether these shelters would be temporary structures, intended for removal in a few years, or permanent ones built to last for many years. Furthermore, the shelters needed to be placed in locations where they could be properly supervised. He also pointed out that, if the shelters were constructed underground, there was a risk that people might not be able to locate them quickly in an emergency. Mr J. Hurley stated that if the Corporation waited to resolve all such matters, they might be waiting

indefinitely. He, like Mr Buckley, expressed surprise that nothing had yet been done to expedite the work. Mr T. Quill remarked, "It seems absolutely useless and childish to make any suggestions here." Mr Connolly again pressed the issue: "When are we going to get on with the job?"

The City Manager responded that everything was ready, pending the exact finalisation of the shelter sites. The outstanding decision concerned whether the shelters would be placed in busy thoroughfares or in less obtrusive locations. Mr Quill then interjected, saying, "Was that not already discussed?" The City Manager replied, "I do not think so."

Mr Quill then stated, "It is quite obvious that there is not the least intention of proceeding with this scheme at any early date. I am not returning to any Committee which made recommendations and had them accepted by the Council, only for them not to be acted upon."[130]

By late November, at a meeting of the Cork Corporation, the insightful recommendations of the A.R.P. Committee were adopted. Proposals submitted by the City Manager for the erection of air raid shelters, including the proposed sites, were recommended for the approval of the Council. They recommended that the shelters be located in the streets as far as possible, with one shelter provided in the Grand Parade Market. Regarding St. Patrick's Street, they recommended that the erection of one shelter in this thoroughfare, or two shelters if the one at the market was not feasible.[131]

In February 1941, within the Public Works recommendations of a city council meeting, a note was made of the City Engineer's report, which indicated that seven tenders had been submitted for the sewer relaying project on South Main Street. The City Engineer suggested that the Corporation should carry out the work using direct labour, estimating the cost at £900. This would represent a saving of roughly £500,

[130] *Cork Examiner 13/11/1940*

[131] *Cork Examiner 27/11/1940*

as the work could be done by creating several small openings and carrying out most of the task underground. This method would not be feasible for a contractor, due to the lack of effective supervision. The recommendation was approved. Mr. Hickey commented that it seemed the Corporation could perform the work just as economically as any outside party. Mr. Horgan remarked that contractors provided valuable employment for workers, noting that some even retained their employees despite having no active work, out of loyalty. He pointed out that these contractors also contributed as ratepayers, though the way people spoke about them in the chamber made it seem otherwise. Mr. Hickey clarified that there was no objection to contractors, and acknowledged that some maintained their staff, but he believed assigning the work externally was a slight against the Corporation's own technical staff. Mr. Jerh. Buckley added that although he too had no issue with contractors, he believed the air raid shelters should have been built through direct labour. The City Engineer's recommendation was ultimately accepted. Mr. Quill inquired about the implementation timeline for the revised rent scheme and urged that it be put into effect immediately. Mr. Horgan seconded the motion, which was then adopted.[132]

At a committee meeting of the Cork Workers' Council in March 1941, a debate took place concerning the use of direct contracts and the rotational labour system in public works schemes. Councillor C. Connolly acknowledged that while rotational labour might be justifiable as a short-term measure, its introduction as a regular practice would need thorough examination by trade unionists. He expressed his disapproval of the way the system was being introduced, stating it was a significant matter and one he had already spoken about during the Corporation meeting. Mr. O'Donovan argued that awarding a contract under the current system effectively meant handing it to a specific firm, one to which there were objections. Councillor Connolly explained that the City Manager had offered a compromise —he would present the tenders to the Corporation so that

[132] *Evening Echo 12/2/1941*

the final decision would lie with them. However, the matter had now been deferred for two weeks. Mr. O'Callaghan put forward a motion, seconded by Mr. O'Donovan, condemning the application of the rotational labour system to critical public works in the city. The motion was passed. Following a recommendation from the Chairman, it was also agreed that the Executive would consider the value of arranging a deputation to appear before the Corporation to address the issue. Mr. Magee also raised concerns about the financial impact on outdoor insurance workers, noting that rising unemployment and the increasing cost of living could cause more insurance policies to lapse. This, in turn, would likely lead to decreased earnings for those workers. He also pointed out the difficulties facing policyholders who were now unable to keep up with premium payments due to the current economic conditions.[133]

In April 1943, it was reported that the Red Abbey, a historic site, known as the Abbey of the Augustinians or Ermites of St. Augustine, had been proposed by Cork Corporation to the Commissioners of Public Works for designation as a national monument. The Abbey was established in 1320 by Patrick de Courcy, Baron of Kinsale. Located on the street that bore its name, near George's Quay, the Abbey's 84-foot tower remained a prominent feature of the area. The original east window of the church was reputedly a striking piece of architecture, measuring approximately 30 feet in height and 35 feet in width. Ownership of the priory and its associated buildings was granted to Cormac McCarthy in 1577. The religious order remained in control of the convent and church until 1640. Later, in 1690, a battery was constructed near the Abbey. The site was subsequently repurposed as a sugar refinery, which was destroyed by fire in 1800.[134]

At a Cork Corporation meeting held in July 1943, chaired by the Lord Mayor (Alderman J. Hickey), a report from the City Manager and Town Clerk was approved. It stated that the

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[133] *Cork Examiner 1/3/1941*

[134] *Cork Examiner 15/4/1943*

Corporation had been offered a mortgage loan of £52,000, to be repaid over 35 years with an interest rate of 3.5 percent. Approval was sought to accept this offer to fund the construction of 70 houses on Cathedral Road. Mr. T. Quill questioned where the Corporation had secured funds at that interest rate. The Lord Mayor responded that, as far as he knew, it came from a Government Department. When Mr. Quill asked which one, the Lord Mayor said he believed it was the Public Works Department. Mr. Quill remarked that they had previously been told funding at such a rate was unavailable. The Lord Mayor replied that it demonstrated what persistence could achieve. Mr. Quill concluded that the Council's stance had been justified. In addition, the Corporation gave approval for a temporary capital overdraft of £50,000, which had already been spent on housing provision.[135]

In September 1944, at a meeting of Cork Corporation, a subcommittee was appointed to consider the question of street naming within the city. The subcommittee will comprise the Lord Mayor, along with Messrs. A. Healy, T. Quill, and J. M. Buckley. The matter arose following receipt of a letter from Cork Aitiri na h-Aiséirghe, which expressed concern that too many of the city's streets were named after figures or individuals with "obvious foreign connections." The letter urged that such streets be renamed in honour of several notable Irish individuals, particularly those whose contributions and sacrifices were particularly deserving of civic remembrance. Of particular note, the letter lamented the fact that not even a laneway in Cork city had been renamed to honour the signatories of the 1916 Easter Proclamation. The writers argued that such renaming would instil a greater sense of national and civic pride among the citizens. Appended to the letter was an extensive list of streets proposed for renaming, including some of the city's most prominent thoroughfares, such as Marlboro Street and Princes Street.[136]

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[135] *Cork Examiner 14/7/1943*

[136] *Cork Examiner 27/9/1944*

The Corporation then agreed to the formation of the subcommittee, to review the proposals put forward, and make recommendations in due course.[137]

At a meeting of Cork Corporation held in October 1944, presided over by Alderman Sir John Fitzgerald, Bart., the Council adopted a recommendation from the Loans Sub-Committee—despite the dissent of Alderman J. Hickey. The recommendation advised that the Council should investigate whether the Commissioners of Public Works would be willing to accept early repayment of a £35,000 loan provided for the Assumption Road Housing Scheme. It also suggested making similar enquiries with the Hospital Trust Board regarding the potential repayment of £120,000, which had been advanced in connection with the Greenmount Housing Scheme.[138]

At a November 1944 meeting of Cork Corporation, presided over by Lord Mayor Councillor S. Cronin, the issue of renaming streets in the city was once again brought to the fore. This arose from two letters of protest—one from the Southern Law Association, objecting to the proposed renaming of South Mall (Padraig Pearse) and Grand Parade (James Connolly), and another from the ratepayers of George's Quay, opposing a suggested change to the name of their street. The Lord Mayor proposed that both letters be forwarded to the Streets Committee, noting that many submissions had already been received on the topic and that a comprehensive review was needed. Mr. E. O'Mahony, B.L., seconded this motion. Mr. F. D. MacCarthy-Morrogh, B.L., while supporting the Lord Mayor's proposal, clarified a significant legal point: the power to change street names actually sat entirely with the City Manager, as confirmed by legal advice from the City Solicitor. The Corporation itself possessed no formal role in making such changes, a fact not widely understood by the public. He acknowledged that while the City Manager may consider the Council's views,

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[137] *Cork Examiner 27/9/1944*

[138] *Cork Examiner 25/10/1944*

the final authority rested with him alone. Mr. P. J. O'Brien cautioned against turning the matter into a divisive public debate and suggested that a committee of the whole Council might work more constructively to find consensus. He formally moved this as an amendment to the Lord Mayor's motion, seconded by Mr. O'Mahony. However, a vote on Mr. O'Brien's amendment saw it defeated by 7 votes to 3, with one abstention (Mr. J. Horgan). Voting against were the Lord Mayor, Alderman Hickey, and Messrs. Connolly, T. Quill, A. A. Healy, F. O'Donoghue, and J. V. Healy. The original motion—to refer all correspondence on the matter to the Streets Committee for further review—was then adopted.[139]

At a May 1945 meeting of Cork Corporation, presided over by Alderman Sir John Fitzgerald, the topic of street name signage was revisited. The Secretary of Comhairle na Gaeilge, Co. Cork, submitted a resolution unanimously passed by the council, advocating for street names that were to be changed to be displayed exclusively in Irish. The resolution also urged that any new streets or roads be named solely in Irish. Alderman R. S. Anthony, T.D., objected, noting that under the Constitution both Irish and English were officially recognised languages. He expressed confusion over what he described as the excessive zeal of individuals pushing for signage in Irish only. Councillor C. Connolly reminded members that the city Corporation had already resolved this matter by deciding that street names should be displayed in both Irish and English. The City Manager confirmed that this directive remained in place, unless formally overturned. Anthony indicated he wished to comment further, but the City Manager pointed out the issue had already been addressed, and the matter was not discussed again at that stage.

Later in the meeting, under the heading of Public Works, Councillor T. Desmond protested against what he described as the unauthorised covering of existing nameplates with new ones by certain individuals, including the Lord Mayor. The Chairman attempted to steer the meeting away from the

[139] *Evening Echo 29/11/1944*

issue, stating it was not relevant to the agenda at that moment. Despite repeated efforts by Desmond to raise the matter, the Chairman maintained his stance. Tensions escalated when Alderman Anthony accused the Chairman of weakness, prompting a rebuke from Alderman Hickey, who defended the Chairman's discretionary authority and criticised the tone of Anthony's comment. As the situation became heated, the City Manager attempted to move the meeting along. When the City Manager rang the bell to restore order, Anthony questioned his authority to do so, asserting that only the Chairman should perform that action. The Chairman then rang the bell himself, prompting laughter among members, and the meeting moved on to the next item of business without returning to the signage issue.[140]

At a Cork Corporation meeting held in July 1945, chaired by the Lord Mayor, Mr. M. Sheehan, a circular letter from the Minister for Local Government and Public Health was read. The letter, addressed to all newly elected local authorities, outlined key challenges that lay ahead. It emphasised that housing remained a top priority, despite ongoing shortages of building materials. However, the Minister noted that significant preparatory work could still be undertaken in the meantime. The letter also urged local bodies to focus on improving health services to enhance community health standards. Additionally, it highlighted the need to upgrade roads to modern standards and not to lose sight of the importance of town and regional planning. Speaking first in Irish and then in English, Mr. S. McCarthy, T.D., commended the City Manager and his team for their efforts in improving the city. However, he criticised the condition of sites where houses had been demolished, calling them a disgrace. He stated that if these sites were intended for new housing or to be converted into playgrounds, action should begin immediately. He requested a report on the current state of these sites and what preliminary work could be initiated. Mr. L. de Róiste supported this request, and it was agreed

[140] *Cork Examiner 9/5/1945*

that a report would be presented at the Corporation's second next meeting.[141]

At an August 1945 meeting of Cork Corporation, presided over by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Mr. M. Canty, a recommendation from the Public Works Committee was submitted and approved. The recommendation included a minute stating that an allocation of £20,000 had been provisionally granted by the Department, with a required local contribution of £4,000. This funding was designated for schemes aimed at providing additional employment for residents of the city in receipt of unemployment assistance. Approval was sought—and granted—for the following works to be undertaken:

- New road between Redemption Road and Gerald Griffin Street: Works to include excavation, demolition of houses, construction of boundary walls, drainage installation, a 6-inch concrete roadway and 3-inch concrete footpaths, with a total width of 40 feet — £13,000.

- Eastview Terrace: Excavation and relaying in 5-inch concrete — £600.
- Roads at Charlemont and Waterloo Terrace: Excavation, drainage, and 5-inch concrete relaying — £2,000.
- Woods Lane and Little William Street: Excavation and relaying in 4-inch concrete — £600.
- Herbert Park: Excavation and relaying in 5-inch concrete — £600.
- Gillabbey Park: Grading of the river bank, construction of a concrete toe and sloped embankment — £3,000.
- Victoria Road: Excavation, levelling, construction of paths, erection of a low wall, and provision of a park — £4,000.

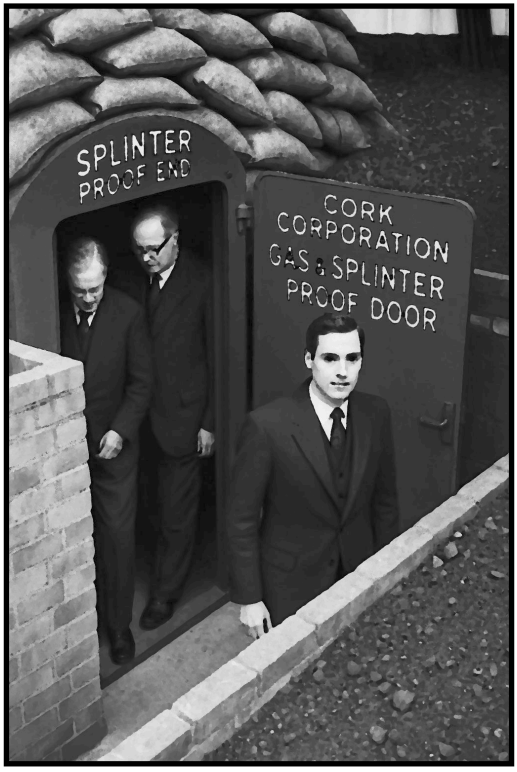
During the meeting, Mr. Cronin requested that a survey be carried out to identify sites suitable for the development of playgrounds in various city districts. The City Manager

[141] *Cork Examiner 25/7/1945*

agreed to provide information on this matter at the next meeting.[142]

[142] *Cork Examiner 15/8/1945*

From the period of 1944-1945, an attempt was made to rename central streets in the city after 1916 Easter figures.



Cork Corporation management took the controversial decision to pay for the construction of air-raid shelters in a neutral city, when a shortage of overground homes was also prevalent.

CONCLUSION

The period between 1920 and 1945 in Cork City's civic history stands not as a simple narrative of destruction and recovery, but as a rather complex journey of adversity, administrative experiment, contested legitimacy, and a somewhat reluctant modernisation. This manuscript has traced the evolution of Cork City's public works within a shifting landscape of political instability, economic hardship, and global conflict. By the end of this quarter-century, Cork City was physically altered, administratively restructured, and socially hardened. It was a city both reshaped and reflective of the broader dilemmas in the Irish Free State.

The Burning of Cork in 1920 is rightly memorialised for its violence and destruction, but its true legacy lies in how it transformed the conversation around urban identity and municipal responsibility. What began as a punitive assault by departing imperial forces became, in time, a crucible for civic rebirth. The devastated city centre was not merely restored; it became a contested site for architectural innovation, political assertion, and public memory. Rebuilding efforts wove together government compensation claims, architectural debates, nationalist ideals, and labour activism, revealing a deeply entangled civic process. The debates surrounding the use of Irish materials, coordinated façades, and height regulations signalled a desire not merely for reconstruction, but for cohesion—an ideal often stymied by fragmented interests.

The dissolution of Cork Corporation in 1924 marked a watershed moment in Irish municipal governance. While often presented as a technocratic correction to dysfunctional politics, it simultaneously revealed the fragility of democratic institutions in the early Free State. Philip Monahan's appointment as City Commissioner brought a model of local management that prized efficiency and order over debate and dissent. Yet, this period of centralised control was not without achievement. It enabled the necessary continuity in public administration during a volatile era and demonstrated the importance of urban governance as a stabilising force

amid a broader national flux. Nevertheless, the memory of disenfranchisement lingered, and the eventual restoration of elected council governance in 1929 reflected a broader re-commitment to local democracy.

Economically, the city's trajectory across these decades was shaped less by municipal ambition than by external pressures. The Great Depression undermined earlier hopes for expansive civic investment. Unemployment soared, public health deteriorated, and the promise of independence seemed, at times, hollow when measured against the lived experience of poverty and precarity. The Economic War compounded these difficulties. For a port city like that of Cork, trade restrictions and economic isolationism were acutely destabilising. Yet the civic administration, through relief works and housing projects, continued to function as a bulwark against deeper societal fracture. World War II intensified the several contradictions of the City of Cork's experience. As a neutral city within a neutral state, Cork City had operated in a strange duality: insulated yet alert, impoverished yet strategic. The construction of air-raid shelters in a city plagued by housing shortages encapsulates the paradox. Material scarcity was matched by administrative creativity. Decisions taken in these years—often imperfect and contested—nonetheless built the scaffolding for Cork City's post-war development. Moreover, the war years demonstrated the capacity of municipal government to act decisively under pressure, navigating censorship, rationing, and geopolitical constraint with a surprising degree of pragmatism.

Throughout, the true engine of Cork City's urban continuity was its people. Labourers who laid concrete slabs, city council members who sparred over priorities, engineers who reconciled aesthetics with necessity—these were the builders of the new city. Their efforts were not heroic in the grand historical sense, but they were foundational. Public works were not just infrastructural achievements; they were embodiments of civic trust, negotiated compromise, and collective survival. By 1945, Cork City had not merely survived a tumultuous quarter-century—it had adapted,

revised its ambitions, and reasserted a measure of civic self-determination. The roads tarred, houses built, and policies enacted during these years became the groundwork for a more stable municipal future.

The city's history, during this period, is not reducible to a catalogue of calamities and recoveries. It is, rather, the chronicle of an evolving urban polity—one that grappled with the scars of imperial violence, the burdens of state formation, and the demands of public expectation. What emerges from this examination is a Cork City neither defeated nor triumphant, but doggedly enduring. Its streets, shaped by fire and reform alike, speak not only to a city rebuilt, but to a polity renegotiated. In Cork City's public works, we glimpse the slow, fragmented, yet profoundly human process of creating a modern Irish city.

STATIO BENE FIDA CARINIS

BUILDING A NEW CITY

POEM - '*THE CORPORATION SEAL*'

BY TADGH QUILL-MANLEY (2024)

A district in the south
On the coastline it has graced
Is a well established charter
Ancient roots from which it's based

The symbol of the city
Placed on the Corporation seal
That Latin script around the edge
Enshrines the common weal

A pair of towers at the Port
Consolidate the fort
Allowing commerce to flow forth
For there's more tea to import

The glowing harbour waves
Drift in from the sea
They travel under bridges
Along the River Lee

Few today remember well
It was on a sunny June day
When this city seal was embraced
By the martyred JFK

Least we not forget
The motto that is his
Invoked now, forever more
'Statio Bene Fida Carinis'

Building a New City: Cork's Public Works, 1920–1945 is a compelling historical account of Cork City's extraordinary journey from devastation to reconstruction in the wake of the 1920 Burning of Cork. Tracing the city's public works efforts across a quarter-century of political upheaval, economic hardship, and war, this book explores how municipal resilience and civic ambition reshaped Cork's urban landscape.

From the ashes of reprisals to the complexities of Irish Free State self-governance, authoritatively detailed chapters chart the dissolution of Cork Corporation, the appointment of City Commissioner Philip Monahan, and the eventual restoration of local democracy. Through extensive archival sources, the narrative weaves together political strife, housing crises, infrastructural development, and wartime austerity.

This is not a triumphalist tale but a nuanced exploration of civic struggle and survival. Richly documented and thoughtfully presented, it captures the human and institutional efforts behind the making of modern Cork City. A vital read for anyone interested in Irish history, urban planning, or the legacy of city reconstruction.